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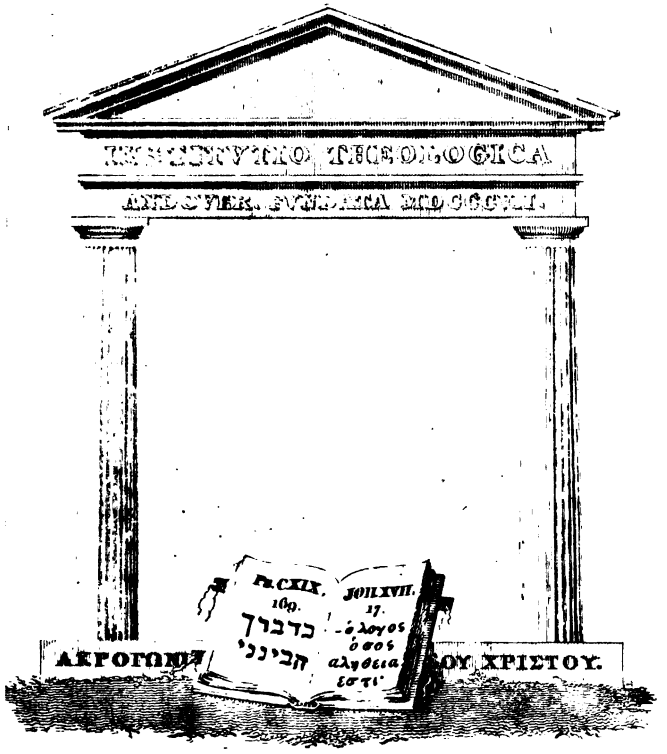

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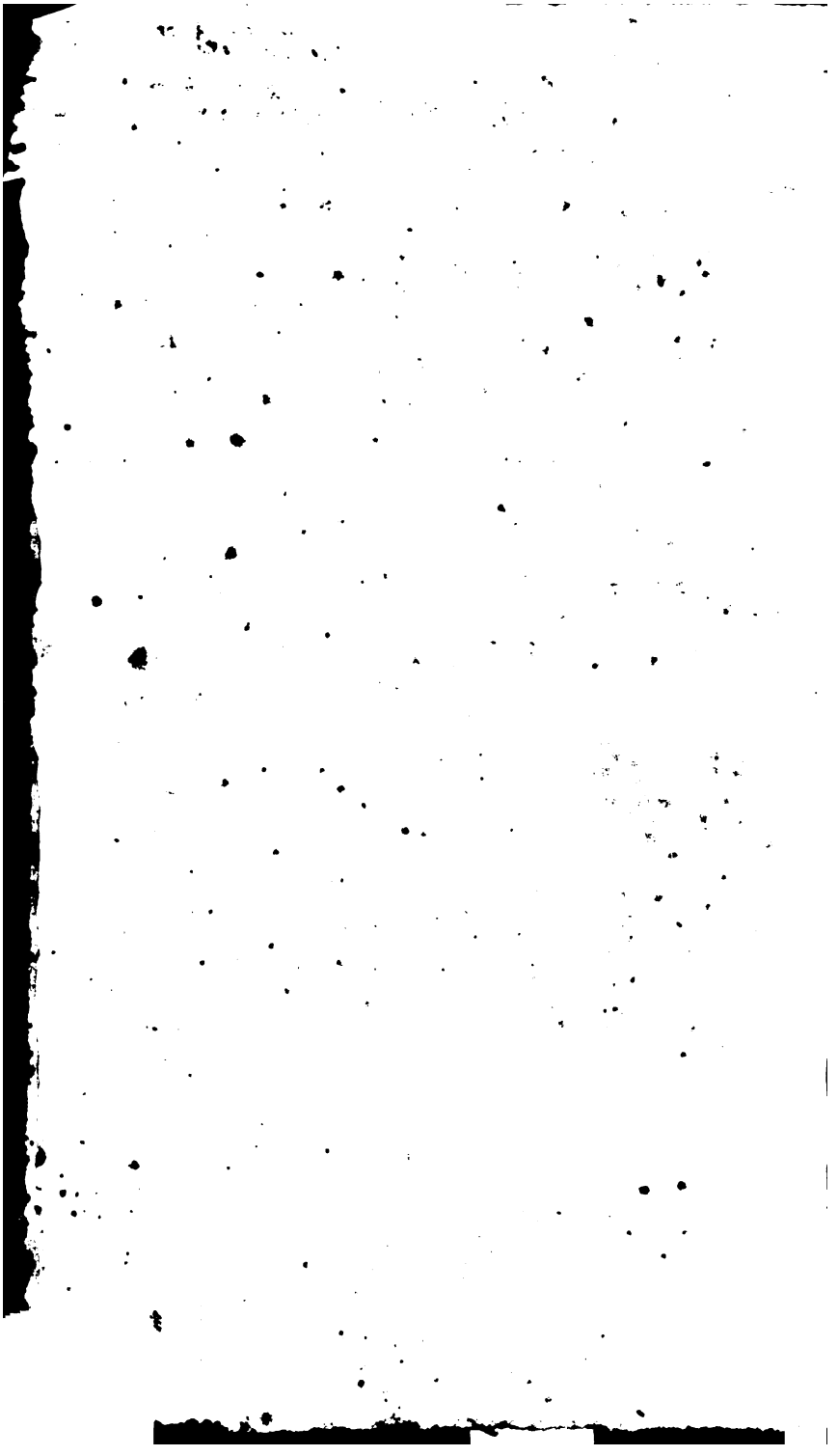

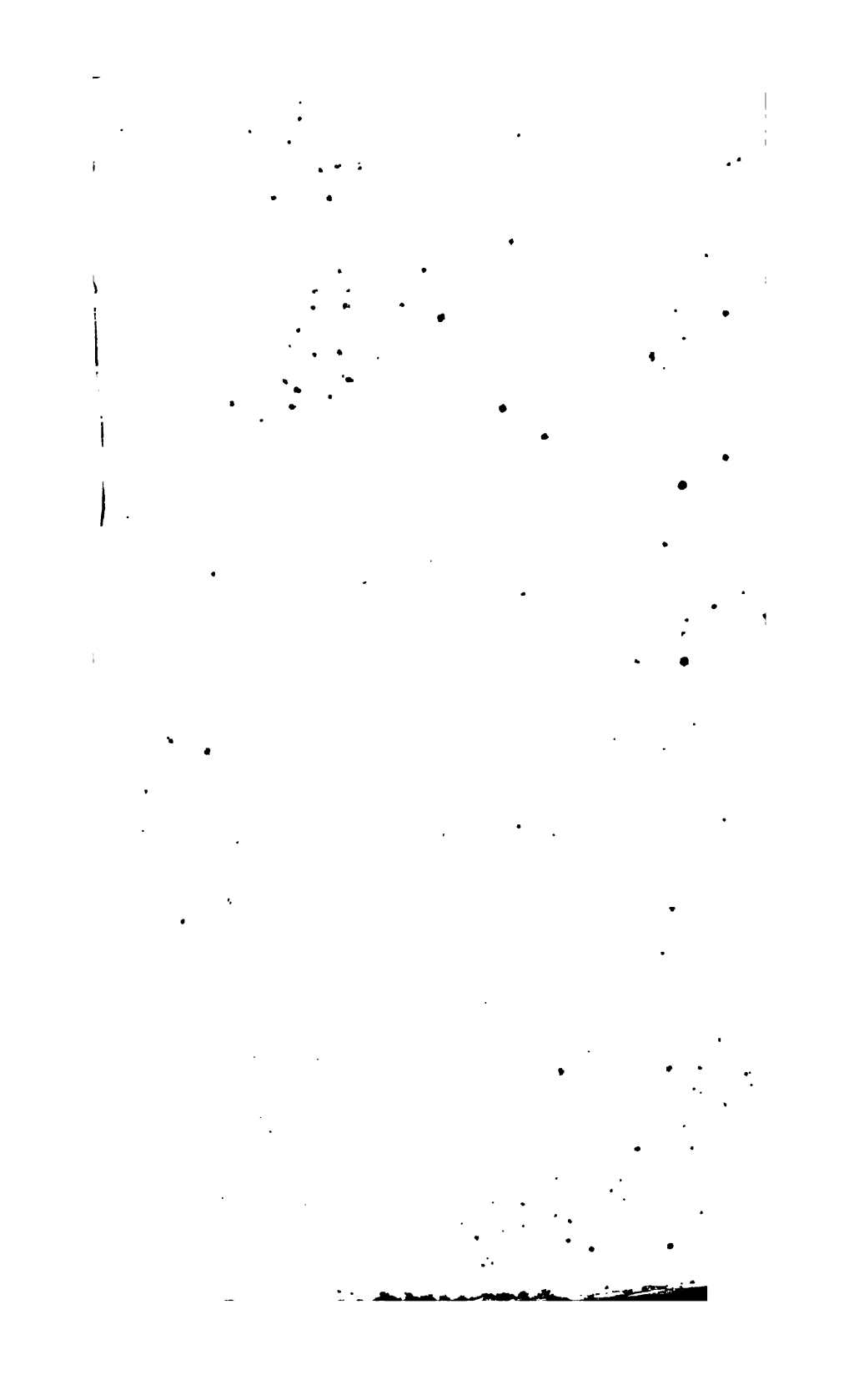

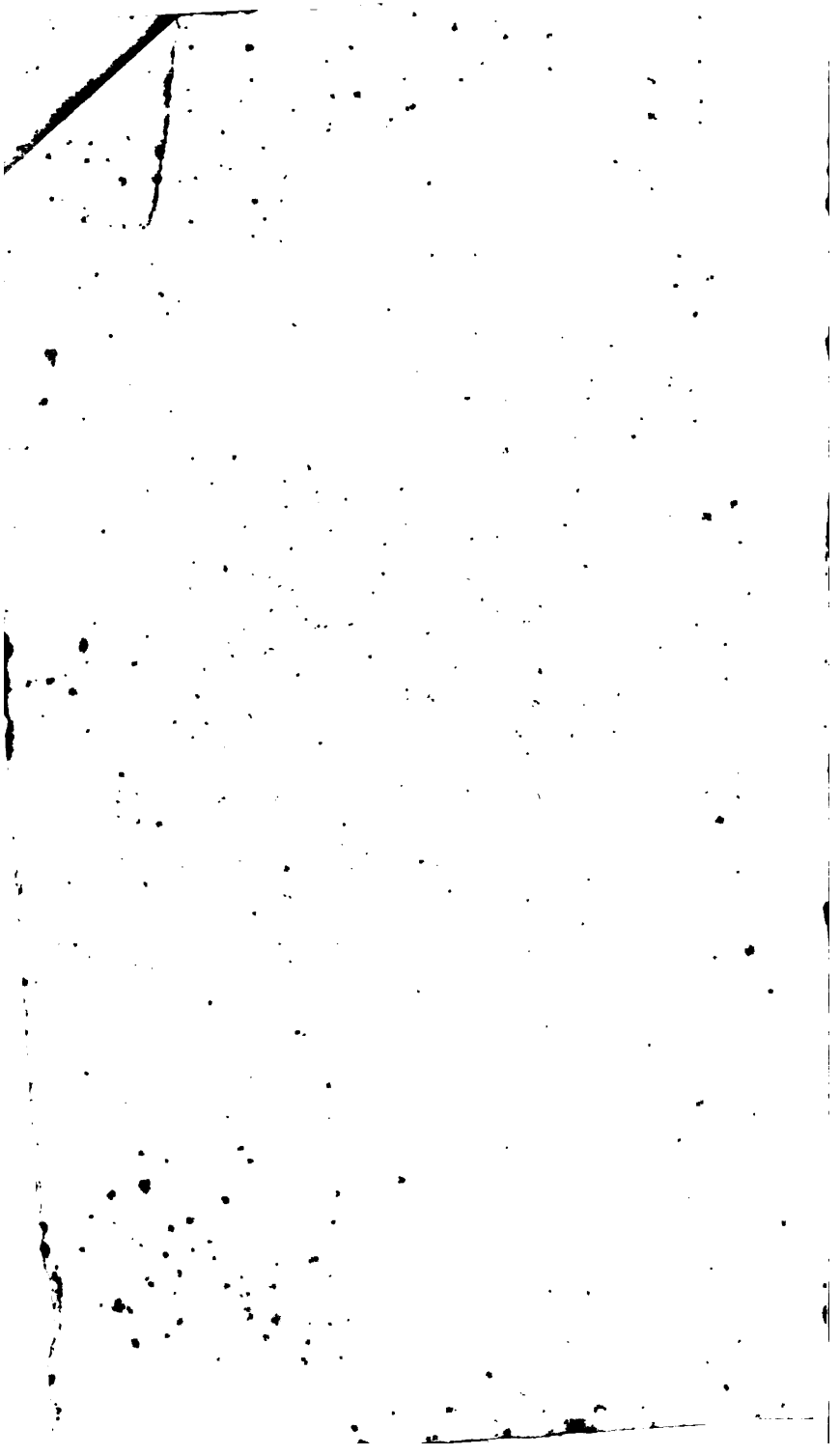

THE CHRISTIAN MINISTRY.

PRINTED BY R. & G. S. WOOD, 265 PEARL-STREET.

THE

CHRISTIAN MINISTRY,

WITH AN

INQUIRY INTO THE CAUSES OF ITS INEFFICIENCY.

BY

THE REV. CHARLES BRIDGES, B. A.

VICAR OF OLD NEWTON, SUFFOLK, AND AUTHOR OF

'EXPOSITION OF PSALM CXIX.'

IN TWO VOLUMES.

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PART IV.

PUBLIC WORK OF THE CHRISTIAN MINISTRY.

CHAPTER IV.

THE SCRIPTURAL PREACHING OF THE GOSPEL.

THIS subject opens to us the master-spring of the effectiveness of the Ministry. The Writer trusts, that he is in some measure aware of the great consideration required to conduct the discussion in a useful and edifying manner; and to touch upon points of difference, with due exercise of Christian forbearance. The Scriptural rule for preaching of the Gospel is—"If any man speak, let him speak as the oracles of God;"* forming all our discourses according to the Scriptural model, as "Moses was ordered to make all things according to the pattern showed him in the mount."† Witsius well remarks, of the *mode* of preaching, 'that the things of God cannot be more fitly explained than in the words of God. The man greatly mistakes, who

* 1 Pet. iv. 11. Beza's note on Tim. ii. 15, is an excellent exposition of this rule—'ὀρθοτομοῦντα—id est, qui primum omnium, quod ad doctrinam ipsam attinet, nihil prætermittat, quod dicendum sit; nihil etiam adjiciat de suo, nihil mutilet, discerpat, torqueat, deinde spectat diligenter, quid ferat auditorum captus, quicquid denique ad ædificationem conducit.' † Heb. viii. 5.

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Sect. I. Th
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ct, to draw sinners to the Saviour.
ten say to young Ministers, 'Let
ch of Christ in your Ministry.'*—
r gives the same advice to his Student
Exhibit as much as you can of a glorious
let the motto upon your whole Ministry
ll.'† The late Mr. Romaine also once
riend of the Writer—'Persons wonder
ays preaching Christ; but the truth is,
le else to preach about.' This uniformity
pon the cardinal point of the Christian
Writer ventures to assert, may be seen
d, character, and fruitfulness of spiritual
, in every successive age of the Church;
ncy in this particular, as he will presently
n more fully to illustrate, is attended inva-
corresponding deterioration of Ministerial

ot however advocating the necessity of
n the name of Christ, as if it would operate
ic of a charm. 'Some men,'—as Mr. Cecil
think that they preach Christ gloriously
name him every ten minutes in their
But this is not preaching Christ'‡—that is
arily so. There is also a fastidious spirit
gregations, that would mark every sermon,
Christ for its *immediate* subject, to be de-
aching. But it is by no means necessary,
gitimate, to force in his sacred name upon
ns, and to allegorize Holy Writ for the
its introduction. As all the principles and
he Gospel bear a relation more or less direct
e enforcement of the obligations and detail of

* Mather's Life of Eliot.
s Student and Pastor, p. 180. ‡ Cecil's Remain

practical religion, *upon the ground of this religion*, is as strictly conformed to the Apostolic pattern, as would be the most exquisite exhibition of the sufferings and death of the Saviour. Nor will this exclusive scheme be found on the other hand to cramp our system, or to confine us within the narrow range of a few points in theology. We might as well speak of a village that has no road to the metropolis, as of a point of Christian doctrine or practice, that has no reference to the cross of Christ. The Apostles introduced it naturally in the discussion of subjects apparently the most irrelevent* —so wide is the scope which Christian doctrine opens for expansion, while all its scattered points ultimately converge in one centre—"Christ and him crucified."†

The death of Christ in this scriptural and comprehensive light, includes the whole Christian system, and the resolution to know nothing—to preach nothing—and to glory in nothing else, is the character of a mind equally enlarged in its compass, and sanctified in its apprehensions. It will operate in an exhibition and offer of Christ to our people, conveyed in general terms as a remedy commensurate with the evil—enough for all, and proposed to all.

* Such as the duties of servants, 1 Pet. ii 18—25; matters of Ecclesiastical discipline, 1 Cor. v. 7. On this latter text the excellent Hervey writes—'Let the serious Christian observe the exquisite skill which here and every where conducts the zeal of our inspired writer. The odes of Pindar are celebrated for their fine transitions, which, though bold and surprising, are perfectly natural. We have in this place a very masterly stroke of the same beautiful kind. The apostle, speaking of the incestuous Corinthian, passes, by a most artful digression, to his darling topic—a crucified Saviour. Who would have expected it on such an occasion? Yet, when thus admitted, who does not see and admire both the propriety of the subject and the delicacy of its introduction.' Theron and Aspasio, Dialogue III.

† Matthew Henry, speaking on the importance of preaching Christ, beautifully remarked—Though 'the scriptures are the circumference of faith, the round of which it walks, and every point of which compass it toucheth; yet the centre of it is Christ. *That* is the polar star, on which it resteth. Williams's Life, p. 119.

An appeal to facts will prove the beneficial and permanent effects which have followed exclusively from this course. This was the subject-matter of the most successful Ministry of the Apostolic age.* Going down the successive ages of the church, this was the style of preaching, which kept the light burning in the candlesticks, like the sacred fire upon the altar, never wholly extinct. Popery was successfully resisted at the era of the Reformation with the same weapons. The early annals of the Moravian missions furnish most valuable and interesting confirmation of this point. When their Missionaries explained to the sottish Greenlanders the nature and perfections of God, and his just claims upon his creatures, the poor heathen were bound up and frozen like their own icy mountains. But in reading to them the affecting scenes of Gethsemane and Calvary, the heart began to melt in tenderness, contrition, faith, and love. They begged to have the story repeated, and it was to them as "life from the dead."†

* 1 Cor. ii. 2. ut supra.

† Crantz's History of Greenland—a most interesting work. In North America the same effects were produced upon widely different subjects. The following was the touching account given of himself by the first convert—'Brethren,' said he, 'I have been a heathen, and have grown old among the heathen, therefore I know how heathens think. Once a preacher came and explained to us that there was a God: we answered, Dost thou think us so ignorant as not to know that? Another preacher began to teach us—You must not steal, lie, nor get drunk, &c.: we answered, Thou fool, dost thou think that we dont know that? and thus we dismissed him. After a time brother Christian Henry Rauch, came into my hut, and sat down by me. He spoke to me nearly as follows: 'I come to you in the name of the Lord of heaven and earth. He sends to let you know that he will make you happy, and deliver you from the misery in which you lie at present. To this end he became a man, gave his life a ransom for man, and shed his blood for us.' I could not forget his words—even while I was asleep, I dreamt of that blood, which Christ shed for us. I found this to be something different from what I had ever heard, and I interpreted Christian Henry's words to the other

Brainerd gives the same account of the peculiar influence, that rested upon the simple exhibition of Christ crucified to his heathen Indians, and the special assistance, that was vouchsafed to himself in the declaration of this all-powerful subject. He remarks to this effect—'This was the method of preaching which was blessed of God for the awakening, and, I trust, the saving conversion of numbers of souls, and was made *the means of producing a remarkable reformation among the hearers in general.*'* So true is it, that we must preach the Gospel, in order to reform the world.

The valuable lives of Mr. Milner, of Hull,† and Mr. Walker, of Truro,‡ nearer to our own time, and in our own Church, speak to the same point. Though men of diligence, conscientiousness, and exemplary conduct, yet were their Ministrations wholly unproductive, when preaching a low and erroneous standard of Christian doctrine; while under a subsequent conformity to the Scriptural pattern, the most happy and practical results followed their labours. The history also of the late Dr. Conyers, of Deptford, is a remarkable illustration of our subject. Devoted to the care of an extensive manufacturing parish in Yorkshire, he was reported to the Society for Propagating the Gospel, as 'the most perfect example of a

Indians. *Thus, through the grace of God, an awakening took place among us.* I say, therefore, brethren—Preach Christ our Saviour, and *his sufferings and death*, if you would have your words to gain entrance among the heathen.'—Loskiel's Missions to the North American Indians—a work of the same character as Crantz's, though with more variety of affecting detail.

* Appendix I. to Brainerd's Life—a most valuable document for the Christian Minister or Missionary.

† Prefixed to his Sermons, pp. xxiii. &c.

‡ Prefixed to his Lectures on the Church Catechism, pp. xxiv. &c. &c.

parish priest, which this nation, or perhaps this age, has produced.' Yet the utmost extent of his success reached little further than as a restraint upon outward irregularities. But when his own views and Ministry assumed a new character, the root of sin was now attacked, and principles of life, holiness, and love, hitherto unknown, were exhibited. His people were not only reformed, but converted. Multitudes were "the seal of his Apostleship in the Lord."* Many hundred communicants united themselves to his church, and "the unlearned and the unbeliever" could not but "report, that God was in him of a truth."†

The Writer has now before his mind several most affecting instances of earnest, affectionate, and diligent Ministers, mourning over the palpable unfruitfulness of their work, without at all suspecting, that the root of the evil lies within themselves. Sincerity, earnestness, conscientiousness, and self-denial, when connected with a low standard of doctrine or practice, will ever be found utterly disproportioned, as means to produce this moral miracle of a radical change among our hearers. Bishop Horsley remarked—'It too often happens, that Ministers lose sight of that which is their proper office, *to publish the word of reconciliation*'‡—and indeed, without this Gospel Ministry, that exhibits "God in Christ reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them,"§ it is of little or no use to appear before our people. We might beseech them with tears and entreaties—"Be ye reconciled unto God." We might act upon their self-love. We might

* 1 Cor. ix. 2.

† Comp. 1 Cor. iv. 23—25; and see an interesting sketch in Newton's Works, i. 562, 563.

‡ Charges, p. 7. § 2 Cor. v. 19.

reason successfully with them upon their folly. We might convince them by our arguments. They might listen to us as to the sound of "one that playeth well upon an instrument."* But no abiding impression would be made. The drunkard would continue to drink, and the swearer to swear. The devoted follower of the world would be uninfluenced by the doctrine, profession, and spirit of the cross.† But in lifting up the cross of Christ in our Ministrations, we may scripturally hope to see the stony hearts broken, and the spiritually dead raised to life. We may anticipate corresponding effects to follow in the spiritual world from the preaching of the Gospel, as when in the natural world the disciples of John were directed to report to their Master, that "the blind receive their sight, and the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, and the dead are raised up."‡

Let it not be supposed that by this train of discussion the importance of insisting upon moral duties in our Ministry is in the slightest measure set aside. We shall soon take occasion to show that practical exhortations scripturally enforced are as necessary for the completeness of our public Ministrations, as doctrinal statements.§ There are however "those who preach the icy morality of Plato, Seneca, and Aurelius, and plainly declare by their practice, that they think Cicero and Socrates better preachers than the Saviour and his Apostles.'‖ We must therefore maintain, that mere

* Ezek. xxxiii. 32.

† This point is forcibly illustrated by our exquisite Christian poet, Cowper. Task, Book v.—The experiment was actually, but undesignedly tried by a master mind, and the ineffectual results were most candidly and explicitly stated in Dr. Chalmers's Address to the inhabitants of Kilmany, pp 40—43.

‡ Matt. xi. 5. § Sect. iii.

‖ Dwight's Sermons. Vol. ii. 452.

lectures on morality—irrespective of the Gospel, though they may have their use in restraining from scandalous sins, will never influence the heart. They may convert the brute into the man. But they will never accomplish that higher and indispensable change of converting the man into the saint. Except our morality be engrafted upon the stock of faith, it will be like the futile attempt to improve the fruit without "making the tree good." No man ever preached more morality than St. Paul; but it was always upon the basis of Evangelical doctrine. It is the man engrafted by faith into Christ, that "blossoms and buds, and fills the face of the" little "world" in which he moves "with fruit."

Dr. Watts admirably remarks in his Ministerial address—'Were all these talents and excellencies,' (alluding to the classic sages and orators,) 'united in one man, and you were the person so richly endowed, and could you employ them all in every sermon you preach, yet you could have no reasonable hope to convert and save one soul, while you lay aside the glorious gospel of Christ, and leave it entirely out of your discourses. Let me proceed yet further and say—had you the fullest acquaintance that ever man acquired with all the principles and duties of natural religion, both in its regards to God and your fellow-creatures—had you the skill and tongue of an angel to range all these in their fairest order, to place them in their fullest light, and to pronounce and represent the whole law of God with such force and splendour, as was done to the Israelites at Mount Sinai, you might perhaps lay the consciences of men under deep conviction ("for by the law is the knowledge of sin"); but I am fully persuaded, you would never reconcile one soul to God, you would never change the heart of one

sinner, nor bring him into the favour of God, nor fit him for the joys of heaven, without this blessed Gospel which is committed to your hands.

'The great and glorious God is jealous of his own authority, and of the honour of his son Jesus. Nor will he condescend to bless any other methods for obtaining so Divine an end, than what he himself has prescribed. Nor will his Holy Spirit, whose office is to glorify Christ, stoop to concur with any other sort of means for the saving of sinners, where the name and office of his Son, the only appointed Saviour, are known, despised, and neglected. It is the Gospel alone, that is the power of God to salvation. 'If the Prophets will not stand in his counsel, nor cause the people to hear his way, they will never be able to turn Israel from the iniquity of their ways, nor the evil of their doings.' Unless, therefore, you have such an high esteem for the Gospel of Christ, and such a sense of its Divine worth and power, as to take it along with you in all your efforts to save souls, you had better lay lay down your Ministry, and abandon your sacred profession; for you but spend your strength for nought, and waste your breath in empty declamation.'* Thus Mr. Cecil well observed—'Christ crucified is God's grand ordinance'.† No souls, therefore, can be won to him, if his name, work, or glory, are in any measure obscured; neither can any steadfastness be expected in a religious profession (unless, indeed, stability in self-righteousness should be so termed), unless our flock have so "received him, as to walk in him, rooted and built up in him, and established in the faith."‡ In the same view, Archbishop Secker remarked to his clergy

* See Watts's Humble Attempt, pp. 27—39.
† Cecil's Remains. ‡ Col. ii. 6, 7.

—'We have in fact lost many of our *people to Sectaries*, by not preaching in a manner sufficiently Evangelical;* and shall neither recover them from the extravagancies, into which they have run, nor keep more from going over to them, but by returning to the right way, "declaring all the counsel of God," and that principally, "not in the words which man's wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Ghost teacheth."' And again—'If you have preached a considerable time in a place, and done little or no good, there must in all probability be some fault, not only in your hearers, but in you, or your sermons: "For the Word of God," when duly dispensed, is to this day, as it was originally, "powerful and sharper than a two-edged sword." Inquire then where the fault may be.'† The importance of this Scriptural preaching of the Word, will fully justify us in pursuing the subject into some of its points of detail.

SECTION I.

DOCTRINAL PREACHING OF THE GOSPEL.

It has been already shown that the death of Christ is the soul, which must give life to the whole system

* Bishop Horne remarked to the same purport—'Many well-meaning Christians of this time thirst after the doctrine of the gospel, and think they have heard nothing, unless they have heard of salvation by Jesus Christ, which is what we properly call the Gospel; and if they do not hear it in the discourses from our pulpits, where they expect to hear it, they are tempted *to wander in search of it to other places of worship.*' Qu. Is the defalcation of our people to sectaries, however to be lamented, *the whole extent* of responsibility of a defective tone of preaching? "*My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge.*" Hos. iv. 6.

† Charges, pp. 276, 296. The Charges of the late Bishops Porteus and Barrington distinctly advert to the same point.

of Christian doctrine. We remark, therefore, in connexion with this point, that our doctrinal preaching should be *full and explicit.* Let it comprehend within its circle the whole mystery of Christ, in his person, offices, and work; connecting itself with the love of the Father, and the work of the Spirit, in every department of Evangelical privilege, duty, promise, and hope. We have often observed a restricted compass in Christian Ministrations. Many confine themselves to those subjects, which most naturally accord with their own individual bias, to the neglect of others of at least equal importance. Some are continually employed in detecting the delusions of a false profession; others, in fulminating the terrors of the law; others, in painting the awful condition of the unconverted; others in general invitations to Christ irrespective of spiritual conviction; others, in an indiscriminate exhibition of the promises and consolations of the Gospel. Some seem to forget a quickening and directing Ministry to the Church as well as to the world. In all these cases there is a want of fulness in the contents of the Ministerial commission. "The deep things of God, revealed by his Spirit," are not the grand topics of the Ministry, nor are they spoken, as the apostle spoke them, in the "wisdom which the Holy Ghost teacheth, comparing spiritual things with spiritual."* Much stress has always been laid upon the *entireness* of the statements of the Divine commission.† Indeed this obligation is bound up in our office. As angels, we must keep close to our

* See 1 Cor. ii. 10—13.

† Mark the instances of Joshha, (viii. 35.) Jeremiah's commission, (xxvi. 2. with lii. 4.)—our Lord's appeals concerning his public Ministry, (Ps. xl. 9, 10. John xv. 15. xvii. 8.)—the angel's message to the apostles, (Acts v. 20.) Paul's testimony before the church, (Acts xx. 26, 27).

message; as ambassadors, we must discharge our commission; as depositaries, we must be faithful to our trust.* The subject matter, therefore, of our commission, must be declared fully without concealment—with our minds divested as far as possible from any preponderating bias towards particular parts of the system—neither forcing offensive truths into undue prominence, nor daring to withhold them in their Scriptural proportion. We must indeed adapt our statements to the spiritual capacities of our people.† But care—much care, is needed, that we omit nothing from fear of offence, or from digust to particular doctrines, either in our own, or in our hearers' minds;—"not handling the Word of God deceitfully, but by manifestation of the truth, commending ourselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God."‡

The guilt, corruption, and ruin of man by the fall, his redemption by the Son of God, and his sanctification by the Holy Spirit, so clearly belong to a full and explicit declaration of the Gospel, that no "scribe" "instructed unto the kingdom of heaven" can fail to set them forth. It is material to show, that in all that relates to our salvation, the three persons of the Deity coincide, though their acts may be differently denominated, as one person is made more prominent, according to his specific office in the economy of redemption. It may be doubted in this view, whether the office of the

* 'Who is a true and faithful steward?'—asks Latimer in his honest plainness of speech—'He is true, he is faithful, that coineth no new money, but seeketh it ready coined of the good man of the house; and neither changeth it, nor clippeth it, after it is taken to him to spend, but spendeth even the self-same that he had of his Lord, and spendeth it as his Lord commanded him.' Sermon on Luke xvi. 1, 2.

† Comp. Mark iv. 33. with 1 Cor. iii. 1—3. Heb. v. 11—14.

‡ 2 Cor. iv. 2.

Spirit is generally set forth in its full scriptural glory and necessity, especially as the originator of a believing reception of the Saviour,* in which character if we duly honour him, we may hope that he will honour us, by exerting that power, which we have distinctly and dutifully ascribed to him.

The statement of these points would also necessarily include the cardinal doctrine of free and full justification, through faith in the atoning blood, and meritorious obedience of the Redeemer, the holy nature and evidences of this faith—the immediate agency of the Holy Spirit in the work of regeneration, progressive sanctification, and in all his offices of holy and heavenly consolation, convincing, enlivening, comforting, and assuring the heart of the sincere Christian, and enduing him with a "meekness for the inheritance of the saints in light." That these are great and fundamental doctrines, will be very generally allowed by all denominations in the church. But to affirm that this is all the Gospel, is, in the Writer's view, to put a part (a very considerable part indeed, but still only a part) for the whole. Much of the Scripture revelation is left untouched and restrained from the people, except, after the example of the Apostles, we trace the blessings of the Gospel to their fountain-head in the sovereign pleasure and everlasting love of God. Unless it can be proved that there is no express revelation of the purpose of God in the Sacred Volume, it is difficult to discover any just reason for its exclusion from our Ministry. If it form a component part of Scripture, it doubtless comes within the terms of the Ministerial commission. No redundancy can be supposed. "All

* John xiv. 26. xvi. 14, 15. 1 Cor. xii. 3.

Scripture is given by inspiration of God;" and all "is profitable for doctrine and instruction in righteousness."* In exhibiting the freeness of the invitations of the Gospel, we must not hide the basis of our effectual calling.† In displaying the riches of grace, we must not forget to trace it to its source in the sovereign pleasure of God.‡ The obligations of holiness cannot be scripturally enforced, if their connexion with the eternal designs of God be withheld.§ The principle of these remarks equally applies to Ministers of the Calvinistic or Arminian school. Both must allow that the doctrines of predestination and election are laid down in Scripture, and therefore that they form truly, if not prominently, a part of "the counsel of God." It must also be admitted on all hands, that they made a part of our Lord's public instructions to mixed congregations,‖ and of the system of doctrine brought by the Apostles before the churches¶—of a pure and more spiritual character indeed than our own, but constituted upon the same basis. It seems therefore necessary to the completeness of our system of public instruction, that these doctrines should be stated with moderation and forbearance, and yet with decision, according to the light in which we trust we have "received them of the Lord." While many serious and candid Arminians have sometimes expressed their anxiety, that their Calvinistic brethren should studiously avoid any decided statement of their views, they impose no such restraint upon themselves. Their published documents will be found to possess as strong

* 2 Tim. iii. 16. † See John vi. 37. ‡ Eph. i. 3—6. 2 Tim. i. 9.
§ Rom. viii. 29. Eph. i. 4. 2 Thess. ii. 13. 1 Pet. i. 2.
‖ See John vi. 24—65.
¶ See especially the Epistles to the Romans and Ephesians.

an infusion of their peculiar sentiments, as is usually seen in writers of the opposite school. They doubtless feel, that, as a part of the Divine revelation, an explicit testimony is required of them in the compass of Ministerial instruction. Mr. Richmond well observed—'I dare not omit what God hath revealed to his church, nor call that useless or dangerous, which he requires me to believe and teach.'* Indeed it appears presumptuous to refrain from expounding to our people, according to the light afforded us, any part of that book, which was designed for general and popular instruction, and of which we are the ordained interpreters. 'Take thou authority to preach the word of God,'† was a large commission entrusted to us at our ordination, and comprehending within its terms the full extent of the Evangelical system. Mr. Richmond faithfully advised a brother clergyman in an early stage of his more enlightened Ministry—'Do not shun to deliver the whole counsel of God. Keep in mind that excellent rule,—'Never preach a single sermon, from which an unenlightened hearer might not learn the plan of salvation, even though he never afterwards heard another discourse.'‡ It is not enough that our preaching be true—It must be the truth—the whole truth—"the truth as it is in Jesus." Indeed we may consider it as the test of the correctness of our system, whether it naturally leads us to value and to use every truth bearing the stamp of Divine authority. Should it make us cautiously refrain either from Scriptural doctrines or practical exhortations, and allow of allusions to certain texts only to weaken their evident power of application,

* Richmond's Life, p. 139. † Ordination of Priests.
‡ Richmond's Life, p. 183.

some serious defect must exist. An accurate view of Christian doctrine would connect every part with some important end, or at least would assure our minds, that such connexion was formed in the Divine purpose, though beyond the ken of our vision to discern it. Yet on the other hand an undue prominence to particular parts of the system must be avoided, as being equally unscriptural with an undue concealment.* Much guard also is required against overstatement. Inferences that appear to be strictly legitimate, must be received with the greatest caution, or rather decidedly rejected, except as they are supported by explicit Scripture declarations. 'Let us ever stop,' as Professor Campbell reminds us, 'where revelation stops; and not pretend to move one inch beyond it.'† How wise and holy was the spirit of Bishop Ridley, thus writing to his fellow-martyr, Bradford—'In those matters I am so fearful, that I dare not speak further, yea, almost none otherwise, than the very text doth, as it were, lead me by the hand.'‡

The study of the Apostolical Epistles is in this view of the first importance. It will show whether every "jot and tittle" of Scriptural truth delivered to the primitive churches be included in our course of Ministerial instruction. It will teach us what to bring forth, and in what mode—to form alike the doctrine, the statement, and the terms, upon the Divine model. It will exhibit the unscriptural scheme of giving abstract views of the doctrines of grace, instead of combining them with the practical enforcements of holiness, in

* See some important remarks in the application of Mr. Scott's Sermon on Election and Perseverance.

† On Systematic Theology, Lect. iii.

‡ Fathers of the English Church, vol. iv. 249.

which the sacred writers uniformly produce them.* It will mark also the error of avoiding the use of the offensive terms, in which holy inspiration has clothed these deep and mysterious doctrines, probably from the apprehension of exciting disgust, misconception, or licentiousness; which, however well intentioned, is unevangelical in its spirit, and gradually substitutes a lower style or standard of preaching in the room of the spiritual character and unadulterated purity of the Gospel.

The objection that these doctrines cannot be understood, or are liable to be wrested by the mass of our congregations, is well met by the forcible language of Bishop Horsley—'Pray earnestly to God to assist the Ministration of the word, by the secret influence of the Holy Spirit on the minds of your hearers; and nothing doubting that your prayers are heard, however *mean and illiterate* the congregation may be, in which you exercise your sacred functions, fear not to set before them the *whole counsel of God. Open the whole of your message without reservation*, that every one of you may have confidence to say, when he shall be called upon to give an account of his stewardship—"Lord, I have not hid thy righteousness within my heart; I have not concealed thy loving-kindness and truth from the great congregation."'†

Our doctrinal statements must also be simple. Our materials of instruction are sufficiently simple. Sin and salvation—ruined man recovered by Christ—comprise the whole. But it is of main importance, that the sinner's way to Christ should be made as plain, as were of old the ways to the cities of refuge. "The stumbling-

* See Deut. vii. 6. x. 15, 16. Rom. viii. 29. Eph. i. 4. ii. 10. 2 Thess, ii. 13. 1 Pet. i. 2.

† Charges, p. 16.

blocks" of unbelief and self-righteousness must be "taken up out of the way of God's people."* The necessity of previous preparation of heart must be discountenanced; an instant application to Christ upon the warrant of his word encouraged; the freeness of the invitations of the Gospel, and the willingness and sufficiency of the Saviour, must be exhibited; and finally, the certainty of acceptance to all that are willing to "repent and believe the Gospel," must be assured. "Repent and be converted." "Believe and be saved." "Look and live" "Whosoever will, let him come."†

The maintenance of scriptural simplicity in our doctrinal instructions, will preserve us from paralyzing our Ministrations by tame and subordinate topics, like men whom Bishop Reynolds aptly describes—'of an Athenian temper, "who spend all their time in nothing else, but either to tell or to hear some new" Theology, not contenting themselves with the wholesome form of sound words, and the general harmony of orthodox doctrine—who direct all the studies and navigations of their minds unto Theologia incognita—to practice new experiments and to make new discoveries. In things doctrinal to cry up new lights, and to amuse the people with metaphysical fancies, as if they were deep and heavenly mysteries, and in the mean time to neglect the preaching of duty, and the savoury and saving principles of repentance and new obedience, is a far readier means to make men question the truth of all that they learned before, than ever to attain any certain knowledge of the things which are newly taught them.'‡

* Isaiah lvii. 14.

† Acts iii. 19. xvi. 31. John iii. 14 15. Rev. xxii. 17.

‡ Sermon on Self-denial, Works, pp. 809, 810. After warning against, 'affectation of new senses and meanings of Scripture, and picking exceptions at the pious and solid expositions of other

Our *doctrinal instructions must also be connected.* Many important truths of the Gospel may be preached in a disjointed manner, and yet the Gospel itself, truly speaking, not be preached. The perfections of God, without a view of their harmony in the work of Christ—the purposes of God, as unconnected with the covenant engagements of Christ—the glories of heaven, without a reference to him as the way thither—the power, and defilement, and guilt, and condemnation of sin, separated from the doctrine of salvation through Christ—the work of the Holy Spirit, unconnected with the atonement, and irrespective of the privilege of union with Christ—the imputed righteousness of the Saviour disunited from his imparted righteousness—the reception of Christ by faith, without its active working upon the renewal of the heart—the exhibitions of the promises, separated from the duties, or of the duties, independent of their constraining motives—these may be portions of the Gospel severally detached, but, as broken off from their Scriptural connection, they cannot be said to constitute the preaching of the Gospel. Indeed, in this indigested disorderly form if not entirely powerless, they must fail in producing, at least in any extensive influence, that solid foundation and superstructure of Christian doctrine, by which the temple of God is raised among us. There is also a

learned men'—he adds this admirable advice—'Whenever we judge it needful to interpose any opinion or sense of our own, let us—First—do it with humility and reverence, and with reservation of honour and reverence unto others from whom we differ: not magisterially with an ἐγὼ φημι, as if we spake rather oracles than opinions. Secondly, let us take heed of departing from "the analogy of faith," and that "knowledge which is according to godliness," into diverticles of fancy and critical curiosity; but let us resolve ever to judge those expositions best and soundest, which are most orthodox, practical, and heavenly, and most tending unto the furtherance of duty and godliness.'

misplacing of the truths of the Gospel, which, like confusion in the machinery of clock-work makes the whole system go wrong. Sometimes also, there is a full display of the work of the Saviour, disjointed, by a mistaken apprehension of the purposes of God, from the free and universal invitation of the Gospel. And sometimes, again, there is a danger of making important statements of practical truth, without a direct and immediate reference to Christ. This failure of tracing the requisitions of obedience to him as the only source of life, produces, instead of "the fruits of the Spirit," only "wild grapes," or "dead works." For as "faith without works is dead," so works without faith are dead also. Much probably of this defective and unconnected statement of truth, so enervating to its Divine power and demonstration, may arise from a conscientious apprehension of danger from distorted or speculative views of Evangelical truth. But we must not mutilate, suppress, or disconnect any part of the Gospel, on account of the abuse that has been made of it. We must not deny the children their bread, because by some it may have been adulterated, or by others it may have been (to use our Lord's image) "cast unto the dogs."* We must not withhold the "strong drink from him that is ready to perish, or the "wine" of Gospel consolation from "those that be of heavy hearts,"† because some have intoxicated themselves by unseasonable mixtures. If some poison their people, others may be in danger of starving them. How few, comparatively, like pastors after God's own heart, feed "their flock with knowledge and understanding!"‡ The evils of Antinomianism, and other

* Matt. xv. 26. † Prov. xxxi. 5. ‡ Jer. iii. 15.

false systems, are indirect as well as positive, producing a revulsion to the opposite side. We forget that *opposition to error* may be error ; and that truth lies in the middle path, and may be easily represented in false connexion, or in unconnected particles, so as to become positive error. Half-statements on either side are misstatements ; and it is of little comparative moment to speak on some points " with the tongues of men and of angels," while on other points of considerable, if not of fundamental, importance, we are either afraid to speak clearly, or we speak under misconception.

We should be careful also that *our doctrinal statements be unfettered.* It is extremely difficult to give a connected scheme of Scriptural instruction, without insensibly moulding our views into the frame work of some human system. Witsius solemnly warns his modest Divine, ' that it is wickedness nearly approaching to impiety, to twist, even in the slightest degree, the sacred oracles in order to square with favourite hypotheses.'* No party in the church is probably in possession of the entire system of Divine truth. Many rough edges must be smoothed, in order to fit a certain well-arranged system. Many texts must be omitted from the fear of inconsistency. Christian integrity therefore will dictate a fearless statement of the Doctrines of the Gospel in their unqualified form and bearings, careless what scheme or system we may be thought to favour. The seemingly opposite points of the Sovereignty of God and the free agency of man must each be stated in the most unmeasured terms. It is not the province of reason to discern or adjust

* ' Ea (Dei oracula) quovis, vel levissimo torquere modo, ut præjudicatis respondeant hypothesibus, nefas ac propemodum scelus est.' De Theologo Modesto.

their consistency, but the exercise of faith to receive them both with equal simplicity, and to leave the harmonizing of them to the infinite wisdom of God. God is a Sovereign, "working all things after the counsel of his own will"—yet does his mercy flow according to the faithful engagements of his covenant. He "divideth unto every man severally as he will." He may give, or he may refuse. Yet he hath said—"Ask, and it shall be given unto you, seek, and ye shall find;" and by this promise he hath engaged that none shall seek "his face in vain."* In the work of regeneration God is the only efficient mover. Man is entirely passive. Hence it seems to follow, that he is acted upon as a machine. Yet is he "drawn with the cords of a man."† No constraint is put upon his will.‡ Salvation is offered, not forced upon him. There is no infringement therefore of his free agency, while the whole work from first to last is the grace of God.§ All is of God—who works in setting us to work‖—and whose rule of procedure is—"He that hath, to him shall be given."¶—Man is addressed as a rational agent. Though paralytic, he is commanded to walk. Though dead, he is called to "rise from the dead."** He may come to Christ—he is invited to come—He is bound to come—and it is his sin, that he does not come; while at the same time his

* Matt. vii. 7, 8. with Isaiah xv. 19.

† Hosea xi. 4. ‡ See Psalm cx. 3.

§ Augustine well remarked—'Si non sit liberum arbitrium, quomodo damnabitur mundus? Si non sit gratia, quomodo servabitur?' Nearly to the same purport was Bernard's language—'Si non sit liberum arbitrium, non est quod salvetur; si non sit gratia, non est unde salvetur.' Epist. 46.

‖ See Phil. ii. 12, 13. ¶ Mark iv. 25.

** Eph. v. 14. See this subject illustrated in the parable of the dry bones. Ezek. xxxvii. 1—10.

selfish unhumbled heart chains him under a moral inability to come, and leaves him without excuse. For it cannot be supposed, that his inability cancels his obligation, or that God will compromise with carnal men, by requiring any thing less than his just and absolute claim. But thus man is urged to acts, for which he has no inherent power. He is pressed with topics, which have a moral suitableness to engage the faculties, and move the natural affections; and in this constituted order of means, the sovereignty, grace, and power of God give life to the dispensation of his word.

We have enlarged upon the subject of this section, from the decided conviction, that a high standard of Christian docrine, scripturally laid down and practically enforced, is indissolubly connected with a corresponding elevation of Christian holiness and Christian privilege. An inefficient Ministry will ever be found, where the system of public instruction is lowered beneath the sacred standard. It is far more easy to bring our people to a certain stage of preliminary advancement, than to carry them one step beyond it. 'In these truths,' as Cotton Mather observes—'there are the articles, which the church either stands or falls withall. They will be the life of your Ministry, nor can the power of godliness be maintained without them. The loss of these truths will render a Ministry insipid and unfruitful; and procure this complaint about the shepherds—"The diseased ye have not strengthened, neither have ye brought again that which was driven away."'* The powerful influence of such a system of doctrinal instruction, as has been here recommended, consists not in the talent of eloquence, but in the

* Mather's Student and Pastor, p. 185.

"simplicity and godly sincerity," with which it is conducted. Its main character may be comprised in one short sentence—"Christ is all and in all." He is not only exhibited in the picture, but in the foreground, as the principal figure, where every part of the picture is subordinated, to give him that prominence and effect, which attracts the eye and the heart exclusively to him.*

This subject may be fitly concluded with the striking exhortation of Bishop Reynolds—'Studiously and conscientiously apply yourselves to this heavenly skill of spiritual preaching. *So convince of sin*—the guilt, the stain, the pollution of it, the curse and malediction whereunto the soul is exposed by it, that your hearers may be awakened and humbled and effectually forewarned "to flee from the wrath to come." So convince of the all-sufficient righteousness and unsearchable riches of Christ, the excellency of his knowledge, the immeasurableness of his love, the preciousness of his promises, "the fellowship of his sufferings, the power of his resurrection," the beauties of his holiness, the easiness of his yoke, the sweetness of his peace, the joy of his salvation, the hope of his glory, that the hearts of your hearers may burn within them, and they

* Bowles gives some cogent reasons for this full exhibition of Christ in our Ministry.—1. Because in him is our only hope of salvation, Acts iv. 12; John xiv. 6. 2. because he is the scope of the whole Scripture, the whole range of truth being employed—either, like the Mosaic economy, "to bring us to him"—or to describe him as if before our eyes—or to lead us to communion with him by the outward and inward means—or lastly that we might walk worthy of him. 3. Because all the first Ministers of the Gospel unite in giving him the pre-eminence in their Ministrations—John the Baptist, (John i. 29.) Philip, (Acts viii. 5.) Paul, (Acts ix. 20. 1 Cor. ii. 2. Eph. iii. 8.) 4. Because all our works, except they be grafted on him, are no better than splendid sins. John xv. 4, 5. Past. Evang. Lib. ii. c. 8.

may "fly, like doves unto their windows," for shelter and sanctuary into the arms of such a Redeemer, who "is able" and willing to save to the uttermost those that come unto God by him," that they may with all ready obedience, and by the constraining power of the love of Christ, yield up themselves to the government of this Prince of Peace, by whom "the Prince of this world is judged and cast out," his "works destroyed," and we for this end "bought with a price," that we should "not be our own," but his that bought us, nor "live any longer unto ourselves, but unto him that loved us, and died for us, and rose again."

'"*Preach Christ Jesus the Lord.*" "Determine to know nothing among your people but Christ crucified." Let his name and grace, his Spirit and love, triumph in the midst of all your sermons. Let your great end be to glorify him in the heart, to render him amiable and precious in the eyes of his people, to lead them to him, as a sanctuary to protect them, a propitiation to reconcile them, a treasure to enrich them, a physician to heal them, an advocate to present them and their services to God, as wisdom to counsel them, as righteousness to justify, as sanctification to renew, as redemption to save. Let Christ *be the diamond to shine in the bosom of all your sermons.*'*

* Works, pp. 1039, 1040. An uniform edition of his works has been lately presented to the public, dedicated to the present Bishop of London. The Christian Remembrancer—a periodical, whose general system is opposed to this view of Christian doctrine—justly ranks Bishop Reynolds as 'one of the most eminent' among the Divines of the seventeenth century;' and marks the edition of his works just referred to, as 'forming a most valuable accession to our stores of sound and masculine theology.' November 1826.

SECTION II.

EXPERIMENTAL PREACHING OF THE GOSPEL.

'PERHAPS the theory of the Gospel was never better understood since the Apostle's days, than it is at present. But many, *who preach it*, or who profess it, seem to lay too much stress upon a systematical scheme of sentiments, and too little upon that life and power, that vital, experimental, and practical influence, which form the character and regulate the conduct of an established Christian.'* The fulness and simplicity, the connected and unfettered character of our Ministrations, may enlighten our people only with a cold and uninfluential knowledge, except an experimental character be added to interest and affect the heart. Our statements may embrace accuracy of detail, and correctness of proportion: but without an unctional spirit, and an application of the didactic system to the different feelings and sympathies of the heart, they will be unproductive. Not that we should be always dealing with certain trains of spiritual exercises, but that we should enter with minuteness and consistency into the varied feelings, difficulties, conflicts, and privileges, which belong to what Scougal aptly calls, 'the life of God in the soul of man.'

Much caution and experience however is required to treat this subject with advantage. It includes the different cases of our people, the various degrees of impression under the Ministry of the word, the

* Newton's Life of Grimshawe, p. 65.

power of conviction, the danger of stifling it, and the best methods of cherishing, deepening, and directing its influence. The power of temptation in its diversfied operations is a material part of the subject, both as regards the "captivity" of the multitude "at the will of Satan,"* or his active and too successful influence over Christian hearts. The incessant workings of native principles of corruption, falling in with the grand designs of the enemy, and materially aiding his operations, need to be most correctly delineated. And hence will arise some important rules for the assurance of Christian sincerity, and for a scriptural "trial of the spirits, whether they be of God."† The different offices of the Holy Spirit, "helping infirmities" in prayer, convincing, enlightening, consoling, strengthening every part of the soul, embuing with the Divine image, and bearing witness to his own work—these will form full and interesting subjects for detailed exposition. The connexion of the work of the Holy Spirit with the exhibition of the love of Christ, his offices, the mutual interest and communion subsisting between him and his church, in every part and in every member, will present the grand subject of the atonement in its vivid application, and in all its experimental power of consolation. This view of the scheme of the Gospel widely differs from the dry and abstract statement of orthodox doctrine. Its life consists not in the exposition, but in the application of the doctrine to the heart for the suitable purposes for which it was ordained—the sanctification and comfort of the sincere Christian. Subjects of this character may occasionally and at seasonable oppor-

* 2 Tim. ii. 26. † 1 John iv. 1.

tunities form entire subjects of our pulpit discourses, though perhaps it is more important, that they should give a general tone and character to our Ministry. Exhortations, however, to caution and watchfulness, must be judiciously introduced, with a plentiful admixture of Scripture proof and illustration, in order to obviate the just imputation of enthusiasm in ourselves, and the real danger of it in our people.

We need scarcely remark, that this interesting style of preaching presupposes a personal acquaintance with these exercises, and an individual interest in their privileges, in order to lay them open experimentally, and, by the grace of God, successfully, in the course of our Ministrations. It is experience alone that qualifies for usefulness, by enabling the Minister to touch the tender strings of the heart, and to suit his instructions to the different cases, trials, and circumstances that belong to the subject of his Ministration.* 'When he has,' as Witsius beautifully observes, 'not only heard something, but seen, and handled, and tasted of the word of life, and has been taught, not by mere speculation, but by actual experience, what he has thus found out; he safely inculcates, from the assured persuasions of his mind, and applies to every case, from his own knowledge of what is suitable to each.'† The Christian Minister may therefore expect his full portion of painful and perplexing exercises. For not only does he require them to promote his humiliation of soul (a most needful and encouraging preparation

* 'Any little knowledge of my own heart, and of the Lord's dealings with my own soul, hath helped me much in my sermons; and I have observed, that I have been apt to deliver that which I had experienced, in a more feeling and earnest manner, than other matters.' Brown's Life and Remains.

† De Vero Theologo.

for Ministerial success) but also to "give him the tongue of the learned, that he may know how to speak a word in season to him that is weary."* It is almost needful, that he should have a taste more or less of the innumerable trials, fears, complaints, and temptations of private Christians, to enable him to prescribe the specific remedy for each varying complaint, and to exercise a spirit of Christian sympathy with them all.

A judicious and occasional reference to our own experience, will add considerable interest to our preaching. The Apostle introduces such reference with considerable effect in his Apostolic letters to his churches.† And when we can tell our people—'We have passed with you through the same tribulation, conflicted with the same difficulties, fallen into the same snares, and overcome the same temptations'—this gives a reciprocity of interest and excitement, that leads them in the midst of present distresses to "thank God" for us, "and take courage" for themselves. Addresses of this character flow from the heart to the heart with a direct passage and immediate effect; and they bring a warmth and impressiveness, compared with which cold speculation or studied eloquence is most insipid. The difference is that of the way-post which directs the traveller, while itself remains unmoved, and the living guide, who becomes a companion to sympathize, enliven, and uphold his fellow. Great discretion however is requisite to regulate the frequency and seasonableness of these personal references. There would otherwise be an immediate danger of "preaching ourselves," instead of "Christ Jesus the Lord." There would also be the appearance of setting up our own

* Isaiah l. 4. † Rom. vii. Phil. iii. 1 Tim. i. 12—15. et alia.

experience as a standard for our people, than which nothing could be more injurious, as an occasion of ridicule to the enemies of the Gospel, and as a serious hindrance to the sincere inquirer, by putting the servant in his master's place—man in the place of God.

The advantages of this style of preaching are various and important. Not to speak of the echo, that it finds in the hearts of our people, we may remark, *that it gives a peculiar flexibility* to our Ministry, and enables us to apply appropriate remedies to the several individual cases. It assists us *also in the right use of our own experience*, not making it the standard of our Ministry, nor on the other hand regarding it as a cabinet of curiosities for private inspection—but working it up as useful materials for our ordinary addresses. This *character of Ministry* is also *usually attended* with *peculiar* blessing. 'I always find,' said the late Mr. Richmond, 'that, when I speak from the inward feelings of my own heart, with respect to the works of inbred corruption, earnest desire after salvation, a sense of my own nothingness, and my Saviour's fulness, the people hear, feel, are edified, and strengthened. Whereas, if I descend to mere formal or cold explanation of particulars, which do not affect the great question—"What must I do to be saved,"—my hearers and I grow languid and dull together, and no good is done.'* Indeed the study of the Apostolical Epistles will mark this style of preaching to be most consonant with the inspired model. What interesting details of lively experience are brought before us in Rom. viii.! How different is the view exhibited in that wonderful portion of Holy Writ, from a dry statement

*. Richmond's Life, p. 184.

of abstract truth, whether doctrinal or preceptive! It is the direct influence of Evangelical doctrine and precept in the speaking testimony of the love, peace, holy fellowship, conflict, joy and triumph of the consistent believer.

Another use of this mode of preaching is *its suitableness to all Christians alike.* "As in water face answereth to face, so doth the heart of man to man."* The outlines of experience resemble the features of the human countenance, which (though so varied and modified by constitution, education or personal habits, that each may be considered to be an original) in all leading particulars are invariably the same. Identity of character is preserved in the midst of an endless diversity of feature. All Christians, being, according to the promise,† under the same Divine teaching, will be taught substantially the same lessons. And though there will be considerable differences in the degrees of their proficiency, and proper individualities to the several cases, arising from the course of human instruction, or incidental circumstances, yet the same system of spiritual and experimental instructions will equally apply to all. The young and the more advanced will be alike profited by the detailed sketch of ways and means in which the principles and actings of the Divine life are implanted, cherished, and maintained. Nor will the unbeliever be left without his share of benefit. Conviction may flash upon his mind—'If this be Christianity, I have yet to learn it, to feel it, and to enjoy it.' Who knoweth, but such a moment of conviction may give birth to a desire, which, when formed into a prayer may prove the commencement of a new

* Prov. xxvii. 19. † Isaiah liv. 13.

creation on his heart—a new era in his life—such as will find its full scope and influence only in the boundless expanse of eternity?

SECTION III.

PRACTICAL PREACHING OF THE GOSPEL.

THE Gospel may be preached in all the accuracy of doctrinal statement, and in all the richness of experimental comfort, and yet may be only as "a very lovely song of one, that hath a pleasant voice."* The practical detail of its obligations and fruits is often a ground of offence, where its doctrinal expositions have been listened to with interest, and even its spiritual enjoyments been tasted with self-delusive delight.† It is more easy to deal with a darkened understanding, and with excited feelings, than with a corrupt will. And if the work of the Ministry were to end with the understanding and affections, without any corresponding practical obligations, the message would be far less offensive to the natural heart. But the Christian Minister will feel that the "declaration of all the counsel of God" would be as incomplete without a direct and detailed enforcement of practical obligation, as if all reference to doctrine or experience were totally omitted.‡ Let these three departments of preaching be exhibited in their mutual connexion, dependence, and use; and the head, heart, and life, will be simultaneously influenced.

* Ezek. xxxiii. 32.
† See Matt. xiii. 20. John v. 35. Heb. vi. 5.
‡ See Matt. xxviii. 19, 20.

The connexion of *practical with doctrinal preaching* is of the utmost importance—to inculcate Christian duty upon the basis of Christian doctrine—to represent it as the natural exercise of love and gratitude, arising from the believing apprehension of Redeeming love—to exhibit the operation of Christian motives flowing from the doctrine of the cross—to mark the union of the soul with Christ, as the only source of holiness, and to trace the acceptance of whatever by this union we are enabled to perform solely to His atonement and mediation. This was the Apostolical system of practical preaching —connecting all relative duties with the doctrine of Christ.* And this is the only effectual mode of attaining the end desired by the use of the means. Bishop Horsley's testimony is most decisive on this point— 'The practice of religion will always thrive in proportion as its doctrines are generally understood and firmly received; and the practice will degenerate and decay in proportion as the doctrine is misunderstood and neglected. It is true, therefore, that it is the great duty of a preacher of the Gospel to press the practice of its precepts upon the consciences of men. But then it is equally true, that it is his duty to enforce this practice in a particular way, namely, by inculcating its doctrines. The motives which the revealed doctrines furnish, are the only motives he has to do with, and *the only motives by which religious duty can be effectually enforced.*†

Bishop Horne has well observed—'to preach practical sermons, as they are called, i. e. sermons upon virtues

* Such as the duties of husbands, Eph. v. 25—wives, 22—servants, Eph. vi. 5. Col. iii. 24 Tit. ii. 10—subjects, 1 Pet. ii. 13. The illative particle (*therefore*) significantly illustrates this connexion and dependance. Rom. xii. 1. Ephes. iv. 1. Col. iii. 1, &c.

† Charges, p. 10.

and vices without inculcating those great Scripture truths of redemption and grace, and which alone can excite and enable us to forsake sin and follow after righteousness, what is it, but to put together the wheels, and set the hands of a watch, forgetting the spring, which is to make them all go?'* In another place he remarks to the same effect, with his happy powers of illustration—'One thing indeed we do affirm, because we can prove it from Scripture, that whoever preaches and enforces moral duties, without justification and sanctification preceding, may as well declaim upon the advantages of walking, to a man that can neither stir hand nor foot: such is the natural impotence of the soul to do any good thing, till it is justified and sanctified. Let the declamation be ever so elegant, St. Peter's plain address, I suppose, would be worth ten thousand of them, to a cripple—"In the name of Jesus of Nazareth, rise up and walk." Such is the difference between an Ethical divine and a Christian preacher.'† One more testimony may be added from an eloquent living writer—'A morality more elevated and pure, than is to be met with in the pages of Seneca or Epictetus, will breathe through your sermons, founded on a basis which every understanding can comprehend, and enforced by sanctions which nothing but the utmost stupidity can despise—a morality, of which the love of God, and a devoted attachment to the Redeemer, are the plastic soul, which, pervading every limb, and expressing itself in every lineament of the new creature, gives it a beauty all its own. As it is the genuine fruit of just and affecting views of Divine truth, you will never sever it from its parent stock, nor indulge

* Bishop Horne's Essays, p. 162.
† Bishop Horne on preaching the Gospel, pp. 7 .8.

the fruitless hope of leading men to holiness, without strongly imbuing them with the spirit of the Gospel. Truth and holiness are, in the Christian system, so intimately allied, that the warm and faithful inculcation of the one, lays the only foundation for the other.'*

The Scripture illustrates this practical exposition of Christian doctrine. The doctrine of the Trinity is stated in connexion with Christian worship, and with the exercise of love to God.† From the doctrine of the incarnation is drawn at one time an arrow of conviction ;‡ at other times it is the motive for humility,§ love,‖ or obedience.¶ The atonement is displayed, as the principle of hatred of sin,** and love to the Saviour.†† The doctrine of election (as we have lately remarked ‡‡) is connected statedly with personal holiness or as an incentive to persevering diligence.§§ The Sovereignty and freeness of grace is not the allowance of Antinomiam ease, but the excitement to laborious activity ;‖‖ so that in every view of the connexion of doctrine and practice is a prominent part of a Scriptural Ministration of the word.

Thus the doctrines of the Gospel, not only explain the nature and inculcate the obligations, but are themselves the principles—nay the only principles—of holiness. No mere precepts will extirpate the natural love of sin, or infuse a new bias in the heart. The doctrine of the word of life is the appointed instrument for effecting the mighty change; and

* Hall on the Discouragements and Supports of the Ministry p. 33.

† Matt. xxviii 19. 2 Thess. iii. 5.

‡ Ye have *killed the Holy One.* Acts iii. 14, 15.

§ Phil. ii. 4—6.

‖ 2 Cor. viii. 9.

¶ Matt. xvii. 5. Acts iii. 22, 23.

** Rom. v. vi.

†† 2 Cor. v. 14, 15.

‡‡ See p. 17.

§§ 2 Pet. i. 10.

‖‖ Phil. ii. 12, 13.

therefore the only practical preaching, that will accomplish the desired end, is the exhibition of Christ as the source of spiritual life, and the detailed enforcement of Christian practice as the active exercises of this life.* We say—*detailed enforcement*—because the Apostle does not satisfy himself with a general recommendation of holiness—but follows it out into the distinct enumeration of particular duties, and reproof of particular sins, as his knowledge of the state of his people dictated to him.† And this we conceive to be a most important part of the Apostolical preaching, as the model for our imitation.

The connexion of *practical with experimental preaching* is also of considerable importance. An exclusive standard of experimental preaching, and an unvaried representation of Christian privileges, irrespective of practical obligations, would be a most unfaithful dispensation of our Divine commission. It is most important to show, that the extent and enjoyment of Christian privileges is a principle not of inactive indulgence, but of habitual devotion to the work of God. It is, when the Christian is realizing his participation of heavenly portion, when a sense of pardon is applied to his soul, when the seal of the spirit is impressed upon his heart, when "fellowship with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ" are spiritually apprehended —it is under the influence of these enlivening delights, that the grateful principle springs—"What shall I render unto the Lord for all his benefits towards me?"‡ The detail of Christian duty is the practical expression of his gratitude for experimental privileges. Relative

* See an admirable sermon on this subject preached at the Visitation of the Archdeacon of Wells. By Ralph Lyon, M. A.
† See Rom xii. Eph. iv. v. throughout. ‡ Psalm cxvi. 12.

situations and circumstances are now improved for increased activity in the discharge of every social obligation—"that he may adorn the doctrine of God his Saviour in all things." Thus, as has been beautifully observed—'Christ is the soul of *duty*, of *grace*, of *privilege*. Christ is the light and warmth, which cheer and animate to exertion. It is the promise and not the precept; it is encouragement and not exaction; it is grace and not nature, which consecrate a course of moral beauty and blessing, and convince the believer that whether grace is to be exercised, or duty discharged, he is eminently "God's workmanship," "the new man, which, after God is created in righteousness and true holiness."* The Scriptural preaching of the Gospel would therefore lead us to preach doctrines practically, and practice doctrinally; omitting neither, but stating neither independent of the other, or unconnected with their influence upon experimental religion. We are sometimes on one side said to deny or to under-rate the importance of practical religion, by insisting upon the full statement of the doctrines of the Gospel, distinct, but not separate from practice. But 'how,' remarks Bishop Horne 'we can be said to deny the existence of moral duties because we preach faith, the root from whence they spring, I know not, unless he that plants a vine, does by that action deny the existence of grapes. The fruit receives its goodness from the tree, not the tree from the fruit, which does not make the tree good, but shows it to be so. So works receive all their goodness from faith, not faith from works, which do not themselves justify, but show a prior justification of the soul that produces them."†

* Budd on Infant Baptism, p. 446.

† Bishop Horne on Preaching of the Gospel, pp. 5—11. It is

But some are as exclusive in their doctrinal statements, as others in their practical enforcements. They do not see the necessity for the details of Christian practice, or they consider them as entrenching upon the unconditional freeness of the Gospel covenant. The abstract exposition of Christian doctrine they deem sufficient for the discharge of their commission, from whence they conceive Christian practice will necessarily flow, without the superfluous aid of hortatory persuasions.

But were not the doctrines of the Gospel as powerful in the Apostles' hands as in our own? Yet did they not leave the tree to grow of itself, and put forth its leaves, buddings, and fruit, without active care and nurture. Who so minute in his detail of practical duties, as he that is most full in his statements of Evangelical doctrine? The latter chapters of St. Paul's Epistles (as we have before hinted) expound the practical obligations in immediate connexion with the most enlarged display of Evangelical doctrine, so that a misguided commentator, or preacher, would find himself in considerable perplexity either in dismissing his exposition of his Epistles at the close of his doctrinal system, or in pursuing the practical parts with a disrelish, and wrong bias upon his own mind. Are not the closing chapters of the Epistles as component parts of the Divine revelation as the previous statements? And can they from their position be conceived to belong to any other dispensation than the New Testament in its most free and extended form?

almost needless to remark the consonance of this view with the truly Scriptural, but deeply humbling, doctrine of Article xiii. Upon this view Augustine justly denominated the moral virtues of pagan philosophers, 'splendida peccata.' 'Per fidem venitur ad opera, non per opera venitur ad fidem,' was one of the accurate and sententious aphorisms of the old Divines.

Did they they not form a part of Apostolic instruction to professing churches? It is to be feared that the real operative principle in many cases, is a disrelish to holiness, which, though in general statements it may be made tolerable, when pressed home in detail, is uncongenial to the taste either of the Minister or the congregation. In conformity to "the wisdom given unto their beloved brother Paul," and manifested in his writings, the other Apostles interwove their practical exhortations into the thread of their doctrinal instructions, thus showing their sense of the importance of raising a goodly superstructure upon the solid foundation of Scriptural truth. Indeed the sound and wholesome doctrine of Christ must be considered to include the fruitfulness as well as the consolations of the Gospel, so that the separation of the doctrine from the holiness of the Gospel is as defective a statement, as the disunion of holiness from the doctrine of the cross; it being as much the design of Christ to restore his church to the image as to the favour of God. The effect of this semi-evangelical ministry will be found in a luxuriant crop of stony-ground hearers, full of notions, excited in their feelings, forward in their profession, but unsubdued in their habits and tempers, equally destitute of the root, of the perseverance, and of the present life, activity, fruitfulness, and enjoyment of the spiritual principle. Nor is this tone of Ministry less hurtful to the sincere professor of the Gospel. Where the inculcation of habitual self-examination, and a well-ordered conversation upon Scriptural principles is neglected, the light of orthodox profession will partake more of a speculative than of an influential character. The "knowledge that puffeth up" will be often substituted for the "charity that edifieth," and a low

and imperfect standard of holiness will be illustrated by a clouded and uncertain exhibition of the spirit of the Gospel.

SECTION IV.

APPLICATORY PREACHING OF THE GOSPEL.

THE chief use of preaching consists in its direct and suitable application to the cases and consciences of our people. Bishop Davenant remarks, that 'the philosopher's maxim—that every action is done by the touch—applies with peculiar force to the sacred action of preaching.'* And it is by this mode of application, that the Christian Minister passes over the lesser matters by the way, to hasten to the main design—"the saving of himself and them that hear him."† Application is indeed the life of preaching—the best mode of commanding the interest of our people; and, what is of higher importance, the grand instrument of conviction to their consciences. 'For this end, we must show them,' as Archbishop Secker reminds us, 'from first to last, that we are not merely saying good things in their presence, but directing what we say to them personally, as a matter which concerns them beyond expression. More general discourses they often want skill to take home to themselves, and oftener yet inclination; so they sit all the while stupidly regardless of what is delivered. therefore we must interest them in it, by calling upon them to observe, by asking them questions to answer silently in their

* Dav. in Col. i. 21.

† 1 Tim. iv. 16. 'Semper ad eventum festinat.' Horace.

own mind, by every prudent excitement to follow us closely.'* The character of Massillon's preaching is said to have been so pointed, that every one thought himself to be the person addressed, and seemed to have neither time, thought, or inclination to apply it to others. And this is the power of effective preaching—in the want of which, no one will be convinced, humbled, awakened, and converted by the most powerful, and even Scriptural statements. It is too much to expect our hearers to apply to themselves truths so uncongenial with their natural propensities. The Preacher must take the part of Nathan, and make the application himself.† "The words of the wise are as goads, and as nails," not laid by, as if the post would knock them in, but "*fastened by the masters of assemblies.*" So unnatural is the habit of personal application, that most hearers apply the doctrine to any one but themselves. The general and unmeaning commendation so often given to the preaching of the gospel, speaks the want of personal interest and concern. A general tone of preaching seems hardly to answer the original design of our Ministry, which is—to lay the truth at every man's

* Charges, p. 272.

† 2 Sam xii. 1—7. When John preached generally, "Herod heard him gladly:" when he came to particulars of application—"It is not lawful for thee to have thy brother's wife"—the preacher lost his head. 'The Minister'—as an excellent old Divine observes—'should desire to have that knowledge of all his hearers, that he may be able to speak as particularly to every one as is possible (Jer. vi. 27). Though he may not make private faults public, or so touch the sin, as to note and disgrace the sinner, yet he may apply his reproofs particularly, so as the party himself that is guilty may know and feel himself touched with the reproof. We must in preaching aim as directly as we can at him whom we desire to profit. Our doctrine must be as a garment, fitted for the body it is made for: a garment that is fit for every body, is fit for nobody. Paul saith of himself, that in his preaching he laboured to *admonish every man*, to *present every man perfect in Christ Jesus.*' Hildersham on John iv. Lect. lxxx.

door, to press it upon every man's heart, and "give each their portion of meat in due season."* This power and individuality of application formed the nerve of the preaching of the Jewish Prophets,† and of our Lord's addresses both to classes of men and to individual cases. His language of reproof to the Scribes and Pharisees, to the Sadducees and Herodians, had distinct reference to the particular sins by which those respective bodies were severally distinguished.‡ In his treatment of the young ruler,§ and the woman of Samaria,‖ he avoided general remark, to point his instructions to the indulgent habit of sin—'talking to their thoughts,' as has been said, in the case of the young man, by a sensible writer, 'as we do to each other's words.'¶ Peter's hearers were pricked to the heart" by this applicatory address.**

One cannot but observe that nothing of this kind is found in the instructions of the heathen sages. Plato, Aristotle, and Tully, dealt out to their disciples cold and indefinite descriptions of certain virtues and vices; but without any practical application of their theories, or any endeavours to impress the mind with personal conviction. Horace and Juvenal attempted something in this way, but in a spirit more likely to excite ridicule and disgust, than to open the avenues of the heart to conviction. Their systems indeed afforded no master-springs to excite feeling or principle. It was a mass of inert matter, without life, motion, or power of interest. The instructions of the Jewish Teachers also were probably of this character. The contrast which

* 2 Tim. ii. 15. with Luke xii 42.
† Isaiah lviii. 1. Micah iii. 8.
‡ Comp. Matt. xxii. xxiii.
§ Matt. xix. 16—22.
‖ John iv. 7—26.
¶ Benson's Life of Christ, p. 300.
** Acts. ii. 22—37.

the Evangelist draws between their mode of teaching and that of his Divine Master, seems to imply that it consisted chiefly of spiritless disputations, without any attempt to command an influence over the understanding, affections, or conscience.* And indeed little could be expected from discourses drawn much more from the traditions of men, than from the unadulterated source of the oracles of God.†

The exigency, however, of the case demands this applicatory preaching. Nothing rouses to consideration, but the sight of a man's own heart laid open before him. Until he feels the Preacher aim the blow at himself, he will continue the customary routine of attendance without uneasiness, and therefore without profit. 'Mere general discourses, therefore,' as Bishop Stillingfleet remarks, 'have commonly little effect on the people's minds. But if any thing moves them, it is particular application as to such things in which their consciences are concerned.'‡ Hence 'the conscience of the audience' should 'feel the hand of the Preacher searching it, and every individual know where to class himself. The Preacher, who aims at doing good, will endeavour above all things to insulate his hearers, to place each of them apart, and render it impossible for him to escape by losing himself in the crowd. At the day of judgment, the attention excited by the surrounding scene, the strange aspect of nature, the dissolution of the elements, and the last trump—will have no other effect, than to cause the reflections of the sinner to return with a more overwhelming tide on his own character, his sentence, his unchanging destiny; and, amid the innumerable millions which surround

* Matt. vii. 29. † Mark vii. 1—7.
‡ Duties and Rights of the Parochial Clergy, p. 31.

him, he will "mourn apart." It is thus the Christian Minister should endeavour to prepare the tribunal of conscience, and turn the eyes of every one of his hearers upon himself.'*

But this applicatory mode should pervade the whole system of our Ministry, and extend to the consolatory as well as to the awakening exhortations of the Gospel. It should direct us to apply the general promises to specific cases; as for instance, the promises of Divine forgiveness to every distinct case of penitence and faith —the declarations of Divine direction, support, or comfort, to each particular emergency, as if they had been made for it alone. Indeed, what is considered to be the property of a good portrait, will not inaptly describe a good sermon—that it looks directly at all, though placed in different situations, as if it were glancing with a particular application to each—"*I have a message from God unto thee.*"†

Bishop Burnet's remarks on application at the close of our discourses are excellent.‡ Mr. Alleine's preaching affords an interesting illustration of the earnestness and weight which the Bishop would concentrate at this point. 'So loth was he to labour in vain, and to pass from one discourse to another, as one unconcerned whether he had sown any good seeds or no on the hearts of his hearers, that in the close of his applicatory part on any text, he ever expressed his great unwillingness to leave that subject without some assurances that he

* Hall on Discouragements, &c. pp. 23, 24. George Herbert's 'Parson was used to preach with particularizing of his speech—for particulars ever touch and awake more than generals.' Chap. vii.

† Judges iii. 20.

‡ Pastoral Care, ch. ix. on Preaching. Claude's observations, with Mr. Simeon's notes appended, may be referred to with advantage.

had not "fought" in that spiritual warfare, "as one that beateth the air;" when also he expressed his great fear, lest he should, after all his most importunate warnings, leave them as he found them. And here, with how much holy-taking rhetoric did he frequently expostulate the case with impenitent sinners, in words too many to mention, and yet too weighty to be forgotten; vehemently urging them to come to some good resolve, before he and they parted, and to make their choice either of life or death.'*

This applicatory part of our discourses will furnish ample field for the exercise of natural talent and eloquence. The mode of pursuing this system will vary much according to the character of the subjects on which it is exercised. In *historical* subjects, it may be drawn either from some prominent feature of the record, or from some collateral circumstances connected immediately with it, or with the context in which it stands. In *doctrinal* subjects, it would be usually deduced in the way of inference, or as illustrating the practical tendency of the subject under discussion, or the experimental privileges flowing from it. The application of a *practical* subject would naturally follow from the detailed exposition of Christian duty; and would readily suggest for conviction, an inquiry into our influential acknowledgement of the obligation; and for encouragement, and exhibition of its reasonableness and advantages, together with the most effectual methods of overcoming the hindrances of a corrupt nature, tempting world, and powerful enemy. The application of *typical or parabolical subjects* would be sought from the antitype or doctrine to which

* Alleine's Life and Letters.

the figure was related. *Prophetical texts* require considerable care and caution, rightly to apply to practical and experimental purposes. In the prophecies *relating to Christ*, the path lies in the direct tract of evangelical preaching. The prophecies *relating to the church*, whether fulfilled or unfulfilled, whether referring to her present and prospective privileges, or to the endurance of tribulations yet in reserve for her—admit of most important personal application, in our interest in her promises, our sympathy in her trials, our anticipations of the glorious prospects of her millennial state, or our danger from judgments impending over her. The *prophetic declarations concerning the world*, give full scope for exhibiting their connexion with the interests of the church, and the faithfulness of God in her defence, as the strongest support of faith, and the most powerful excitements to peace and love, to humble ourselves before his power, and to seek a lot among his obedient and happy people.

The preceding remarks, however, have for the most part supposed the *application to be left for the close of the sermon*. But Dr. Doddridge's advice was—'Remember that the final application, reflections, or inferences, are not *the only places* in which to introduce your addresses to the converted and unconverted.'* The method of perpetual application, where the *subject will admit of it*, is perhaps best calculated for effect—applying each head distinctly, and addressing separate classes at the close with suitable exhortation, warning, or encouragement. 'You have been half an hour,' said the late Mr. Robinson to a brother clergyman, 'without one word directly aimed at the conscience.'† His own

* Doddridge's Preaching Lectures, Lect. x.
† Robinson's Life, p. 317.

Scripture characters (originally delivered in the form of sermons) are perhaps the best popular specimens of this mode of address: for which indeed he appears to have had a most peculiar talent, in constant exercise from the commencement to the close of his sermons.* The epistle to the Hebrews furnishes an admirable and most complete model of this scheme. Argumentative throughout, connected in the train of reasoning, and logical in its deductions—each successive link is interrupted by some personal and forcible conviction, while the continuity of the chain is preserved entire to the end. Thus the superiority of Christ to the angels (the first step of the argument) is improved as a motive for attention to the Gospel, and a warning against the neglect of it. His superiority to Moses suggests an encouraging excitement to steadfastness. The mention of Moses naturally introduces the history of the fathers of the people, to whom the inspired penman was addressing himself, which opens a fruitful matter for solemn caution and animating encouragement, in the exhibition of Israel as a typical people both in their character and their privileges. Passing onward to display his superior excellency to the Levitical priesthood, some practical exhortation, some fresh view of evangelical privilege, some new and enlivening glance at the all-sufficiency of the Saviour, is introduced in the course of the argument. The whole system of the Jewish economy is then brought forward to exhibit the incom-

* A beautiful specimen of this preaching may be found in Claude's Sermon on Phil. ii. 12, given in his Essay. See also Mr. Simeon's Sermon on the Gospel Message, appended to his edition of Claude. Walker of Edinburgh may be referred to for similar specimens: as for instance, his sermon on 2 Cor. vi. 1. Vitringa also gives an exquisite pattern in a sermon on the history of Jabez, (1 Chron. iv. 10.) in his Methodus Homiletica.

parably more substantial privileges of the Christian dispensation, and intermixed with heart-stirring motives to the exercise of faith, love, and general devotedness. With the same view a concluding sketch is given of the Old Testament history, to illustrate the identity of Christian principle, and to enliven the energies of the sincere Christian under all his difficulties and perplexities.

This method of current application is however the most difficult form of address. The skilful introduction of suitable topics, and the decent dismissal of them severally, before they become worn out—peculiar choice of thoughts and expressions—affectionate impressiveness and animation of manner, are indispensable to give to this mode of address its full effect. Hortatory subjects are on the whole best adapted, and doctrinal subjects the least fitting, for this way of preaching. Nor would it be necessary in the adoption of it to analyze every minute particle of the text; but far preferable, though with due care to textual exposition, to select the most impressive and awakening topics, forming the prominent features of the passage under consideration. Perhaps also, as a general rule, this is the mode, that can be least of all adopted as a system. Few men are capable of sustaining it equably, and with a suitable adaptation to the ever-varying occasions, and to the characters and circumstances of their hearers. It requires an elevated tone of excitement under judicious control, so as to be searching, appropriate, and animated thoughout. Much depends, therefore, upon the preacher's state of mind. To enter in an unequal frame upon an exercise that demands his full powers of interest and vigour, would probably end in personal discomfort to himself, and in total failure of effect.

Closeness, faithfulness, discrimination, and love, will be the characteristics of this applicatory system; the matter of which will be gathered from an accurate acquaintance with the individual cases of our hearers, and from a full display of the infinite riches of grace and glory, and of the tremendously awful consequences of "neglecting so great salvation."

SECTION V.

DISCRIMINATING PREACHING OF THE GOSPEL.

"THE discerning of spirits,"* in its ordinary measure, is a spiritual gift yet continued to the church. And there is no gift more important for the wise and edifying discharge of the Christian Ministry. A knowledge of character—an accurate insight into the motives of Christian profession, is a most desirable attainment, and one to which is annexed a special Ministerial promise.† Whatever natural acuteness may belong to this faculty, yet as a *spiritual qualification*, it is a part of that heavenly wisdom, of which the Christian Minister needs a double portion, and which is "given liberally unto him"‡ that asketh.

The losing sight of the wide distinction between a credible profession and a spiritual conversion of heart, has occasioned the general and most dangerous mode of addressing all persons under the Christian character, upon the ground of their acknowledgment of a national creed, or external regulations. It is therefore most important to *draw the line broadly between the church and the world.* It cannot be too strongly laid down

* 1 Cor. xii. 10. † See Jer. xv. 19. ‡ James i. 5.

in our Ministry, that the Word of God recognizes but two classes among men—those that "are of God, and the whole world that lieth in wickedness.* They are described by *their state before God*, as converted or unconverted—by *their knowledge or ignorance of the Gospel*, as spiritual or natural men—by *their special regard to Christ*, as believers or unbelievers—by *their interest in the Spirit of God*, "having not the Spirit of Christ," or "being in the Spirit"—by *their habits of life*, "walking after, and minding, the things of the flesh or the things of the Spirit"—by their respective *rules of conduct*, the course of this world or the Word of God—by *the Masters whom they respectively obey*, the servants of God and the servants of Satan—by *the road, in which they travel*, the broad road or the narrow way—by *the ends, to which their roads are carrying them*—death and life—hell and heaven. The line of demarcation, therefore, between these two classes, with the numerous modifications belonging to each, is like that "great gulph,"† which separates the two divisions of the eternal state. There can be no amalgamation between these principles, containing as they do within themselves the elements of contrariety in every particular. And therefore to classify these two denominations in general terms, and under one name, is to confound light with darkness, and Christ with Belial. Nothing can have a more direct and fatal tendency to quiet the consciences of the unconverted, and to perplex the conscience of the sincere Christian, than this loose and indiscriminate application of the Gospel to both descriptions in one general mass. It is therefore most important to a Minister, to lay down with

* 1 John v. 19. † Luke xvi. 26.

all possible plainness and accuracy the distinguishing marks of the converted and the unconverted, that each of our people may be able to form a competent judgment of his own case. Any misconception or failure in distinctness gives advantage to the self-delusion of the heart on the one side, and to the scrupulosity of unbelief on the other—errors, both of which seriously affect the spiritual condition of our people, and from which the clear light of Scripture is alone sufficient to guard them.

Nor is it less important to *separate between the professing and the true Church.* Not part of the Christian character is without its counterfeit. The genuineness of the work of God is estimated, not by the extent, but by the influence, of Christian knowledge—not by a fluency of gifts, but by their exercise in simplicity, humility, and self-denial—not by any excitement of feeling, but by its connexion with holiness and love. Brainerd (and no man had a clearer insight into counterfeit religion) excellently remarked, 'that much more of true religion consists in deep humility, brokenness of heart, and an abasing sense of want of grace and holiness, than most, who are called Christians, imagine.' He would often speak with the strongest abhorrence of that high profession which had nothing of the nature of sanctification in it, that did not tend to strictness, tenderness, and diligence in religion, to meekness and benevolence towards mankind—and that was not manifested by modesty of conduct and conversation." He emphatically enforces the importance of this discrimination upon a probationer for the Ministry. 'Labour,' said he, '*to distinguish clearly* upon experiences and affections in religion, that you may make a difference between the gold and the shining dross. I say, labour here, if ever *you would be an*

*useful Minister of Christ.'** This peculiar difficulty reminds us of the importance of studying the frame and moving principles of the human mind. Some knowledge of this interesting subject (without entering into metaphysical depths) will shed light on many perplexing cases, enabling us to mark the influence of bodily passions, constitutional temperament, or disordered imagination, in casting a cloud upon genuine piety, or framing a false resemblance of it.

But we must also regard the different *individualities of profession within the church*, in order to direct the efficiency of our Ministrations, if we wish to ascertain progress in satisfactory cases. What stage of the Christian life is reached; what is the degree of strength or weakness, of faintness or overcoming in the spiritual conflict; of advancement or retrogression in evangelical holiness; of growing distinctness or obscurity in the apprehensions of the truth; of decided separation or remaining conformity to the world; of increasing glow or decline of the love of Christ in the soul: that we may discriminate and direct specific instructions to the several cases. The Minister, as Bishop Hall remarks, 'must discern between his sheep and wolves; in his sheep between the sound and the unsound; in the unsound between the weak and the tainted; in the tainted, between the nature, qualities, and degrees of the disease and infection; and to all these he must know to administer a word in season. He hath antidotes for all temptations, counsels for all doubts, evictions for all errors, for all languishings. No occasion, from any

* Letter ix. appendix to his Life. It is scarcely necessary to refer to Edwards's celebrated work on the affections—as the closest and most searching touchstone of Christian sincerity, and the most accurate detector of the diversified form of false profession and delusive experience.

altered state of the soul, may find him unfurnished.'* 'The epidemic malady of our nature,' as has been admirably observed by a writer lately referred to, 'assumes as many shapes, and appears under such a variety of symptoms, that these may be considered as so many distinct diseases, which demand a proportionate variety in the method of treatment; nor will the same prescription suit all cases. A different set of truths, a different mode of address, is requisite to rouse the careless, to beat down the arrogance of a self-justifying spirit, from what is necessary to comfort the humble and contrite in heart; nor is it easy to say, which we should most guard against, the infusion of a false peace, or the inflaming of the wounds which we ought to heal.'†

Every subdivision of the two grand classes receives a distinct and appropriate application in the Apostolic Ministry. Every feature of sin or of holiness, every class of sinner or saint, is justly discriminated in the course of Scriptural address. The Gospel is exhibited, not *in the general*, but in its detailed adaptation to every specific case; so that every attentive self-observer may find his own heart laid open before him.‡

Any want of discrimination must generally impede the success of our Ministry. It is not the general power of the medical art, but the suiting of the remedy to the disease, that operates with healing, though perhaps

* Bishop Hall's Epistles, Decad. iv. Epist. 5. Works, vii. 210. — † Hall's Sermon, ut supra, p. 22.

‡ St. Paul's sketch of the different features of the converted and unconverted, together with his distinct treatment of babes and adults; and St. John's distribution of believers into the several classes of "little children, young men, and fathers,"—may be referred to as illustrative of this point. Rom. viii. 1—13. 1 Cor. iii. 1. Heb. v. 12—14. with 1 John ii. 12, 13.

painful, efficacy. What should we think of a practitioner, who had one sovereign remedy for every kind of complaint, without any regard to the patient's age, constitution, or habit? And yet this promiscuous application would be more safe in medical science than in experimental divinity, as the spiritual constitution is more susceptible of injury than the material system.* Close and distinct consideration, therefore, of the several cases and characteristic features of our people, is one of the component parts of an effective Ministration.†

* 'Most assuredly,' remarks Mr. Scott, 'this *undistinguishing* way of preaching is "casting that which is holy unto the dogs;" and I am deeply convinced, is one of the worst mistakes that a preacher can fall into; tending most directly to stupify the consciences and harden the hearts of the ungodly, and to "strengthen their hands, that they should not return from their evil way;" and, in proportion, discouraging the heart of the humble, broken, contrite believer.' Letters and Papers, p. 441.

† Zepper speaks so admirably upon the subject of this Section, that, as his work is but in few hands, we cannot forbear a quotation:—'Cujus operis difficultatem tam multiplex et varia auditorum, quibus verbi divini mysteria dispensanda sunt, diversitas sexuum, ætatum, ingeniorum, opinionum, profectuum, conditionis, institutionis, morborum et affectionum animi discrimen, imó contrarietas non parum auget: dum alii hypocritæ sunt, alii afflicti peccatores; alii flagitiosi, alii pié viventes; alii desperabundi, alii cum infirmitate et conscientiæ variis tentationibus variè luctantes; alii pabulo, quod pascuá tantúm, et fontes Israëlis sapiat, contenti, alii delicati et nauscabundi, quorum palato nihil feré sapit, quantumvis orthodoxum, nisi carnem quoque et mundum resipiat. Quos animorum morbos, et diversam auditorum rationem, ut nosse difficile est: ita convenientia omnibus et singulis remedia, ex verbi divini pharmacopolio depromere, eaque feliciter etiam applicare, quanti, quamque, immensi laboris et sudoris, quanti ingenii, quantæ spiritualis prudentiæ res est?—Unde etiam Christus Ecclesiæ suæ pastorem servo comparat prudenti et fideli, super famulitium Domini constituto, ut illis alimentum det, et quidem in tempore, hoc est, non promiscué, obiter aut perfunctorié, sed pro ratione temporum, adeoque et locorum et ingeniorum, quibuscum negotium illi est. Matt. xxiv. 45.' Preface, pp. 5, 6.

SECTION VI.

DECIDED PREACHING OF THE GOSPEL.

THE power even of a Scriptural exhibition of truth is often materially weakened by an indecisive manner of statement. The doctrines of the Gospel appear to be allowed and set forth; but in so feeble and hesitating a tone, as evinces either a careless investigation into their character, a doubtful opinion of their truth, or an indistinct apprehension of their value and efficacy. Such a representation awakens but little interest, and produces no effect. Our people feel little obligation to receive what, from the spiritless mode of presentment, appears to be of minor importance—at least not worthy of inconvenient consideration or expensive sacrifices. In many serious statements of the doctrine of human corruption, of the cardinal doctrine of justification, of the work and influence of the Spirit, it would be difficult to detect any positive contrariety to Scripture; while yet there is an evident deterioration from the "full assurance" with which our Reformers have laid them down, as constituting the foundation of the faith and practice of the Gospel, and as indispensable to the character, hope and establishment of the consistent Christian. It is therefore most important to come to clear and decided views of the Gospel, to deliver them in a clear and decided manner, and thus "to magnify our office," by the undoubted and warranted confidence, that our message is "not the word of men, but in truth the word of God." On points connected with the Divine purposes, on which difference of sentiment has always existed, the exercise of Christian moderation

and forbearance is most suitable. But on the grand fundamentals of the Gospel, an authoritative decision of statement becomes us—not allowing or supposing a doubt to belong to our message, any more than to our own existence. In this mode the Apostles and their fellow-labourers preached the Gospel—not as a matter of secondary moment, or as feeling it necessary to prove its truth. They had received it from the mouth of God, they were personally acquainted with the credentials of its Divine authority, they delivered it as a *testimony*, bringing with it its own evidence; and thus, "by manifestation of the truth they commended themselves to every man's conscience, in the sight of God."* How strenuously did they defend themselves from the charge of indecision, not allowing it even in ordinary matters. The Apostle considered it as too grave an accusation to be lightly passed over. It might have proved so injurious to his Ministry, that he felt himself justified in calling his God to witness, that in no respect had his word been fickle among them, but that his testimony of his Saviour had been consistent, decided and unwavering.†

Such was the Apostle's decision in his own testimony, that he hesitates not to curse himself, or even an angel from heaven, upon the supposition that he could "preach any other Gospel, than that which he had preached unto them."‡ To those whom he detected in undermining it, he '*would give place by subjection, no, not for an hour*, that the truth of the Gospel might continue with' the church. Nay, where he met with an opponent to the liberty of the Gospel in the person of an Apostle—"he withstood him to the face,"

* Comp. Luke i. 3. 1 John i. 1—3. 2 Peter i. 16. with 2 Cor. iv. 2.
† 2 Cor. i. 17—20. ‡ Gal. i. 8, 9.

"even before the whole Church, because he was to be blamed."* Yet this was the same Apostle, who in matters of lesser moment was ever ready to "become all things to all men, if that by any means he might save some,"† who would give up the use of meat to the end of his life, rather than put a stumbling-block in the way of a weak brother,‡ and who would circumcise Timothy in forbearance with the infirmities and prejudices of his brethren, to gain a more conciliating access to their hearts.§ This was he, who, in his own spirit, was "gentle among his people as a nursing mother cherisheth her children," who yet could not endure among them any perversion of doctrine, or laxity of practice without the severest rebukes and fearful threatenings.‖ So important is it that the character of decision should be—not our own spirit—"lording over the Lord's heritage" or "having dominion over their faith,"¶ (a spiritual exercise of the power of the princes of this world**) but "the meekness and gentleness of Christ," who, though the servant of all—"as the messenger of God, spoke as one having authority." "We speak," said he on one occasion, "*that which we know, and testify that we have seen.*"†† "We have the same spirit of faith," said his chosen Apostle, "according as it is written, I believed, and therefore have I spoken; *we also believe, and therefore speak.*"‡‡

* Gal. ii. 5, 11, 12.
‡ 1 Cor. viii. 13.
‖ 1 Thess. ii. 7, 8. with Gal. v. 2.
¶ 1 Peter v. 3. 2 Cor. i. 24.
†† John iii. 11.
† 1 Cor. ix. 22
§ Acts xvi. 3. 1 Cor. iii. 17.
** Matt. xx. 25.
‡‡ 2 Cor. iv. 13.

CHAPTER V.

THE MODE OF SCRIPTURAL PREACHING.

WHAT diversity do we observe in the mode, in which the doctrines of the Gospel are exhibited by our most approved Ministers! Their style, their compositions, their mechanical systems of instruction, have each their individual character, and something probably may be learned from all. The tone of mind, our habits, preparatory training, schemes of study, conversance with certain schools and standards of preaching—all combine to mould the character of our Ministrations. Some will adopt one mode, some another; nor can any decision be absolutely pronounced upon the superior excellency of one of them to the rest under all circumstances. The Divine blessing evidently depends not on the discovery and practice of the best mode—but upon the simplicity in which we seek for direction, and the conscientious diligence with which we improve the light afforded to us. Yet there are some specialities worthy our consideration, on which we shall venture to offer a few suggestions.

SECTION I.

TOPICAL AND EXPOSITORY PREACHING.

THE mode of communicating our message is either *topical*, preaching from texts and small portions of Scripture detached from their context—or *expository*, taking large and connected portions of sacred writ, as

the ground-work of our public discourses. It is most injudicious to set either plan in opposition to the other, or to adopt either exclusively. Each has its own advantages, and their combination in the pulpit system offers the best advantages.

The *topical* scheme has the example of our Lord in its support, on his entrance upon his public Ministry. He read his text, interpreted it, laid down the doctrine of it, began to apply it for reproof, and to illustrate it by Scripture example; and thus would he have proceeded to the end, had not the madness of the people, in the midst of their wonder, interrupted his course.* The difficulty of this scheme is to make the context the leader of the text, and to draw out the short detached propositions of the text into a full display of the doctrines of the Gospel, tracing the connexion of the subject matter of the text with the several continuous parts of the Christian system, so that the whole truth may be substantially preached, "perfect and entire, lacking nothing." Such is the fulness not only of the complete revelation of the Gospel, but of every minute particle, that a mind exercised in the depth of this heavenly mine, will find in every recess "the unsearchable riches of Christ;" and with these resources, a failure of bringing forth the fundamental doctrines of the Gospel from insulated texts will prove, not the exhausted state of the treasure, but the want of spiritual and accurate observation of its hidden store.

The *expository* scheme, though sometimes a less popular and impassioned exercise, yet, by a judicious mixture with the topical system, forms a most important vehicle of Christian instruction. Large, compre-

*Luke iv. 16—30.

hensive, and connected views of Divine truth are thus set forth, than which nothing is more conducive to enlarged views of Christian truth, or to the maintenance of Christian stedfastness. The habit of building upon a text what is not authorized by the context is prevented, and our people read the Scriptures with more interest, because with more understanding, and with less danger of being misled by disjointed views of truth. They look for the confirmations of Christian doctrine, more from the general strain of the sacred argument, than from the several members of insulated texts.

Many subjects are also brought forward, which otherwise might probably have been omitted.* Matters of application to particular sins or errors occur in their ordinary course, without just imputation of personality. Short occasional hints, thus naturally arising from our subjects, fall with a weight of conviction for which our hearers are often wholly unprepared. There is no time to take the alarm, and to fortify the mind against conviction, as they might do, when the main subject is directly levelled against their individual grounds of reproof. The whole extent of the Scripture field is also thus laid open in the length and breadth thereof. Occasions are offered of setting forth every doctrine and enforcing every practical obligation. Our views and application of truth being forced into an extended range, are much preserved from the wearisome habit of sameness and repetitions. The mind of God is discovered more accurately in the precise statements, position,

* Perhaps instruction connected with divorce would not have occurred in a village Ministry, except in a regular course of Exposition. (Mark x. 2—12.) In this way the writer somewhat reluctantly introduced it, but with unexpected effect.

and prominence of truth. Here 'God speaks much, and man little.'* A remedy is thus provided to preserve the clear light of doctrine without the closeness of system. This scheme formed a prominent part of the primitive instruction.† Augustine and Chrysostom dealt largely in it. The Homilies of the latter father are justly considered as among the best models for expository preaching, and the most valuable relics of ecclesiastical antiquity. Generally speaking, however, the course of exposition should not be too long, the sustaining a decline of interest should be accurately watched, and an interchange of the two systems be adapted for greater variety and interest.

SECTION II.

EXTEMPORE AND WRITTEN SERMONS.

THE Writer does not attempt to settle this mooted point for his brethren. His own practice is combined with the most ready concession to those, who are 'fully persuaded in their own mind' of the superior advantages of a different system. None, generally speaking, but enthusiasts, are concerned with *extempore preaching*, strictly so called. Unpremeditated speech was promised to the Apostles with a specific reference to the difficulties of their situation, which would not admit of human resources of help.‡ And though their public Ministry was probably of this kind, yet no precedent

* Chrysostom. † See Cave's Primitive Christianity, ch. ix.

‡ Luke xxi. 14, 15. Matt. x. 19, 20. The martyrs inherited an undoubted interest in this promise. But it never was intended to promise Divine inspiration in its ordinary sense without premeditation, or to imply that preparatory study was either unnecessary, or a bar to the reception of needful assistance.

can be drawn from miraculous influence overcoming natural disadvantages, with a superinduced and Divine power for an extraordinary work.

The term is therefore retained in its popular use, referring to *unwritten* sermons, digested and arranged by preparatory meditation, the language and the filling up of the outlines only being left to the occasion of the moment.

As a general rule, we may remark, that the passage from heart to heart is more direct, and the sympathy* more immediate with the natural flowings of the preacher's heart, than with communications through the medium of written composition. The extemporary preacher seems to have the advantage in improving this sympathy, which, whether originating from himself or the congregation, is productive of the happiest effects. Passing occasions are also thus more readily applied, which otherwise from want of facility and practice might have been lost. Contemplation also, abstracted from the scene of our work, loses something of that warmth, which the reality before our eyes at the moment of action is so well calculated to inspire. The immediate contact with our people in the presence of God will always furnish materials for animated address, which in the habit of self-possession and faith will naturally clothe itself with spontaneous and suitable utterance—the effect of which will be usually perceptible in an increased liveliness of attention in our congregations.

Mr. Cecil's advice for commencing the practice was —'Begin at once; take the ease and pliancy of youth into the formation of your habit.' Mr. Robinson on

* ——— Si vis me flere, dolendum est
Primum ipsi tibi. HORACE.

the contrary recommended very cautious steps—'Let no man attempt to preach without book, till he has patiently written all, and the whole of his discourses for seven years; let him then begin sparingly and gradually.'* This had been the rule of the first seven years of his own Ministry, from which he declared, only dire necessity induced him to swerve. Much, however, must depend upon the preparatory exercises, by which the mind has been disciplined—the extent of its stores —and the success in conflicting with, and overcoming hindrances, whether of a constitutional or spiritual character. Mr. Robinson (unlike Mr. Richmond, who subsequently attained an unparalleled degree of eminence in this practice,†) was successful from the first, and probably he would have been equally so, had his term of probation been curtailed to half its limits. A mind formed in his mould, correct and orderly in its arrangements, furnished with ample and solid materials, and trained to enlarged and Ministerial exercises, would be warranted in ordinary cases to commence within a much shorter period.

A most erroneous notion prevails of the easiness of this attainment. A collection of words is often mistaken for an idea, and fluency of utterance is considered to be either identical with solidity of thought, or a fair compensation for its deficiency. Now such an extemporaneous faculty can bring no substantial and spiritual instruction to our people. A lower standard may indeed be acceptable and useful in some congregations. But for a well conducted habit, zeal, solid scriptural information, with simplicity of style, impressiveness of manner, and fluency of utterance are important. In

* Vaughan's Life of Robinson, pp. 322, 325.
† Richmond's Life, p. 155.

most cases the mind wants to be enlarged by a fund of knowledge, such as will increase our ideas—form our style and manner into readiness and perspicuity—and strengthen the various powers of the mind by diligent and judicious exercise. Bishop Burnet acquired this attainment by a fixed and constant habit of meditation upon a most extended range of subjects, and by speaking his thoughts aloud at those times with a studied accuracy of expression.* But after all, a mind deeply enriched with the unsearchable treasure of Scripture is the main assistance. As Jerome speaks of his friend Nepotian—'that by daily reading and meditation in the sacred volume he had made his soul *a library of Christ.*' This is *instar omnium.* Nothing at least will compensate for the want of it, while it will under some circumstances supply the place of secondary qualifications.

Much help may also be derived from conversational habits with our people. What the moment suggests in speaking to individuals, would be equally applicable to a number; and practice with frequent interchange of communication would gradually inspire confidence.

'Smaller excursions'† in Cottage readings, would also be another step of attainment. Familiar expositions of Scripture in our domestic worship is also one of the best preparations. A young Minister studying a passage morning and evening, consulting commentators, and expounding extempore, can hardly fail of enriching his mind with thoughts, and acquiring a Scriptural style of simplicity and confidence.

This exercise is therefore combined with thoughtful and well-digested habits of composition. Dr. Dod-

* See his Life. † Burnet.

dridge, without recommending the practice of written sermons, gives detailed rules for most elaborate pulpit composition.* And thus the fluency of the pulpit, is the result of the diligent employment in the study, which has often been committed to the press with very slight variations from the public delivery. The advantage therefore which Bishop Burnet conceived to belong to written sermons, may be claimed for this system perhaps with a balance in its favour. It often combines 'heat and force in delivery' with 'strength and solidity of matter,'† and volumes of sermons are gathered from thence, that in all essential points will rank with the most elaborate compositions of a more mechanical system.

At the early stages, perhaps the advice of the Roman orator would be suitable—who recommends much writing as the best preparation to good speaking.‡ Indeed it would scarcely be conceived how little apprehension the tyro in theology obtains of his own immature attainments, until he endeavours to express his ideas on paper. At every step he finds unlooked-for difficulties, and constant need of expansion and of correction. He has to "lay again the foundation" of what he fancied himself to have attained, not having prepared his way as he advanced, or having thoroughly mastered any part of his subject. The quantum of composition will however vary according to the natural constitution and acquired habits of the mind. But in few cases could a certain proportion be omitted with advantage. A man rarely unites *sound judgment* with a lively

* See his Preaching Lectures.

† Burnet's History of the Reformation, Book I. year 1542.

‡ Caput autem est, quod (ut vere dicam) minime facimus (est enim magni laboris, quem plerique fugimus) quam plurimum scribere. Cic. de orat.

imagination, and therefore his sermons in the want of previous composition, would be solid inanimate matter, deficient in apt illustration and pointed application. The preacher of *an excursive* fancy needs the use of his pen to restrain himself within the limits of an accurate and connected plan; and without it the digressive and irrelevant matter would probably form the most considerable part of his discourses. The *fluent preacher* with little reading, judgment, or imagination, without the use of this resource to put matter into his shadowy mechanism, will be wordy, declamatory, unsubstantial, and uninteresting. Indeed the gift of fluency without a habit of application or a well furnished mind, would be rather a misfortune than a desirable qualification. It would be attended with the personal danger of neglecting the improvement of his own understanding, and with the Ministerial temptation of digressing from his proper subject at times of embarrassment, to irrelevant points more agreeable to his own inclination.

Written sermons were indeed unknown in the early Primitive Church. The nature of their public services did not admit of the practice. Their sermons were little else than expositions of the Scriptures read in the congregation, commonly of the lesson last read, as being most fresh to the memory of the people. Two or three sermons were sometimes delivered successively in the same assembly—'after the reading of the Gospel, the Presbyters exhorting the people one by one, not all at once; and after all, the Bishop, as it is fitting for the Master to do.'* Augustine's and Chrysostom's frequency of preaching, connected with incessant Ministerial activity, rendered it morally impossible, that

* Cave's Primitive Christianity.

they could have *fully written*, and consequently read, their sermons. And though Burnet states, that the practice of reading sermons was in usage at the time of the Reformation (and probably not unknown even among the Christian fathers*) yet extemporaneous preaching was used by some of the most eminent of our English Reformers. No other judgment can be formed of Latimer's honest "plainness of speech;" and incidental allusions of several of his cotemporaries bear to the same point.†

Archbishop Secker, after discussing the question of written and extempore sermons, recommends written sketches, combined with extempore delivery, as 'a middle way used by some of our predecessors;'‡ and adds, 'perhaps duly managed, this would be the best.'§ 'A man, however, cannot expect a good habit of preaching thus, without much study and experience. Young beginners should use themselves to a more exact and elaborate way. When a good style and expression is first learned by perusing, it will afterwards be more easily retained in discoursing.'‖ No lack either of matter or expression need generally be apprehended in a 'well digested and arranged subject.'¶

* Some hints may be found in the writings of Augustine and Gregory, referring to the custom of their sermons being written and read to the people when they were prevented from preaching in person: which shows that the custom of reading, though not practised by them, was not wholly unknown.

† See some references in Budd on Infant Baptism, pp. 474, 475.

‡ Such as Bishop Bull. See his Life by Nelson, p. 59. Bishop Spratt, Clerg. Instructor, p 251. Some most admirable rules for the attainment of this exercise are given by Bishop Burnet, in his Pastoral Care, chap. ix.

§ Charges, pp. 287—291. ‖ Wilkins's Eccles. p. 203.

¶ ——————— Cui lecta potentur erit res,
Nec facundia deseret hunc, nec lucidus ordo.
Verbaque provisam rem non invita sequuntur.
Hor. de Arte Poet.

'Whose mind soever is fully possessed with a fervent desire to

"Of the abundance of the heart the mouth will speak;" 'nor will the preacher,' as has been observed, 'be able to repeat a tenth part of the truths which God has communicated to him, while meditating upon his text.'* Increasing interest, aided by practice, will also gradually remove difficulties, and that 'vehement simplicity,' which Cecil justly defined to be 'true eloquence,'† will characterize our preaching, even amidst much humbling and most profitable experience of Ministerial weakness. If parliamentary or forensic speakers have attained an uninterrupted fluency of expression, even while "leaning to their own understanding," much more, if the Lord means to employ this habit in his service, may we assure ourselves of a competent measure of spiritual ability, in the use of the appointed means, and in dependance on the promised aid. Nor are we ever better fitted for our work, than while cherishing a deep toned recollection—"Without me ye can do nothing."

Professor Campbell seems scarcely to recognize this practice in the Kirk. He discussed the several advantages and disadvantages of *reading and repeating their discourses*, and justly complains of the burden of the latter usage, as interfering with important pastoral engagements.'‡ Besides, in the act of delivery, it is no more than a school-boy's exercise of most 'unreasonable

know good things, and with the dearest charity to infuse the knowledge of them into others—when *such a man would speak*, his words, like so many nimble and airy servitors, trip about him at command, and in well-ordered files, as he would wish, fall aptly into their own places.' Milton.

* Act of Synod of Berne, ch. xl. quoted in Fletcher's Portrait of St. Paul. † Cecil's Remains.

‡ Campbell on Pulp. Eloquence, Lect. iv On Past. Char. Lect. ix. Comp. Smith's Lectures on the Pastoral Office, Lect. xx. Fenelon also has some just remarks on the disadvantages of memoriter sermons. Dial. ii.

laboriousness,'* with which the heart has as little necessary concern, as it is often supposed to have with the pages of the book.

After all, however, it appears to the Writer, that far too great importance is attached to this mode by many excellent ministers. If he has adopted it for himself as 'the more excellent way,' he is fully persuaded, that such is the diversity of gifts among preachers of equal eminence, that the best mode cannot be improved in all cases with equal advantage. Some have greater readiness of expression by their pen. With others most freedom is experienced in the excitement of their feelings, by immediate contact with their awful responsibility. It will readily be granted, that a judicious and animated system of reading (no very unfrequent case among the serious clergy) is more edifying than an ill-conducted and unfurnished habit of extempore speaking†—not to speak of the digested materials of

* Secker's Charges, p. 291.

† The following lines have much good sense in them:

'Should you, my friend, the important question ask—
With or without my papers shall I preach?
My answer hear and weigh. Your sermons write
From end to end; and every thought invest
With full expression, such as best may suit
Its nature and its use; and then pronounce
As much as your remembrance can retain.
Rather read every sentence word for word,
Than wander, in a desultory strain—
A chaos, dark, irregular, and wild—
Where the same thought and language oft revolves,
And re-revolves to tire sagacious minds;
However loud the momentary praise
Of ignorance, with empty fervours charm'd.
But never to your notes be so enchain'd,
As to repress some instantaneous thought,
That may, like lightning, dart upon the soul,
And blaze in strength and majesty Divine.'

Gibbon's Christian Minister.

experience re-excited and remembered, which are brought forward on this system with greater advantage than on the extemporary scheme. The fruitful Ministrations of Mr. Milner of Hull, and Mr. Walker of Truro, and the early years of Mr. Robinson, were raised upon the scheme of written compositions; and some of the most successful Ministerial labours within the Writer's sphere of observation have been characterized by the same system. And may it not be asked on the ground of ecclesiastical consistency—why should the book be more objectionable in the pulpit than in the desk? Why is it not possible spiritually to preach as well as to pray, with a form? Extempore preaching is the *mode* not the *matter*—the shell—the vehicle, not the essential substance. Nor was it the manner that gave effect to this mode in apostolic practice! A sermon written or unwritten may be alike the fruit of prayer, and the exercise of faith; and according to the spirit of the composition, and the principles in action, not according to the mode of its delivery, is it accepted and honoured. In either case there is the same need of faith, and the same difficulty in its exercise. In either case is the same danger of formality; nor is it easier to say whether the dependence upon the book or upon the gift is most natural or delusive.

But it is hard to maintain an elevated view of the advantages of one system, without an undue depreciation of the other. Many excellent divines trace the usage of reading sermons to unbelief, an undue regard to self, the fear of man,* or to "the spirit of the world."† But who, from the days of St. Paul, was less under the influence of these unevangelical principles than Luther?

* See Newton's Letters to Mr. Barlass.
† Budd on Infant Baptism, pp, 493—496.

Yet he tells us 'that (occasionally, not in his ordinary custom) he preached out of the book, though not of necessity, as if he could not do otherwise, *yet for example's sake to others.*'* Mr. Milner's written compositions, in the faithfulness of statement, unction of style, and closeness of application, are exceeded—we might almost say equalled—by no Ministry conducted upon the opposite system. Perhaps they could not be more justly characterized than by Mr. Budd's description of the offensiveness of *extemporaneous preaching.*†

A writer in the Christian Observer‡ (who has thrown out many valuable hints upon the general subject) charges this practice upon idleness. Mr. Baxter, however, in noticing the Quaker's objection—'You read your sermons out of a paper, therefore you have not the Spirit'—replies, 'It is not want of your abilities, that makes Ministers use notes, but it is a regard to the work, and good of the hearers. *I use notes as much as any man, when I take pains ;* and as *little as any man, when I am lazy,* or busy, or have not time to prepare. It is easier for us to preach three sermons without notes, than one with them.'§ The principle of Baxter's reply—as rebutting the objections of '*reading sermons out of a paper*'—bears upon this point. This accusation was made the ground of the celebrated mandate

* See Edwards's Preacher, i. 220.
† Budd on Infant Baptism, p. 497.
‡ See Christian Observer, Oct. 1828.
§ Church History, 4to. 1680. p. 471. Bishop Hall tells us of his own practice—'When I preached three times in a week, yet never durst I climb into the pulpit to preach any sermon, whereof I had not before, in my poor and plain fashion, penned every word in the same order wherein I hoped to deliver it ; although in the expression I listed not to be a slave to syllables.' Account of himself, p. 34.

of King Charles.* But the theological authority of this curious document, issuing from King Charles's court, is reduced to a minimum; and its universal observance at the time when religion was at the lowest ebb among the clergy, would have been a woful calamity to this nation. For how much less calculated for instruction would have been extempore addresses from unpractised and unspiritual men, than written compositions, which might have embodied some useful substance from extrinsical resources. Besides, may not this charge be applied in some instances to the extemporary system? May not indolence render the mind (with a tolerable fluency of utterance) unwilling to burden itself with the labour of thinking out important matters? Bishop Stillingfleet complained in his day, 'There is got an ill habit of speaking extempore, and a loose and careless way of talking in the pulpit, which is easy to the preacher, and plausible to less judicious people.'† In both cases it would be admitted to be the abuse, but both systems are evidently liable to abuse. The same writer somewhat boldly states, that a man who is not capable of preaching extemporaneously, is 'not fit for the Ministry—being not "apt to teach."'‡ But would not this supposition have disqualified Moses from his divine commission, which, though not identical with the work of preaching, yet comprised a considerable portion of instruction, and would have been much commended by fluency of utterance? Had God deemed it indispensable for His work, He could as easily have supplied that deficiency, rather than have compensated

* Appendix to Dr. Buchanan's Sermon on the Eras of Light, and Richmond's Life, p. 157.

† Duties and Rights of the Parochial Clergy, p. 30.

‡ Christian Observer, Oct. 1828.

for it by extrinsical help.* When therefore the heart is right, and the indications of the will of God clear, why may not the deficiency be similarly provided for by extrinsical resources?

The opponents never advert to the very frequent reason for the adoption of written sermons—*concession to the temper and prejudices of our people.* It seems incurring a fearful responsibility, if any of our people should withdraw from our Ministry, on account of offence taken upon this ground. "The offence of the cross" respects the matter, not the mode, of our Ministrations; and this, be it remembered, is the only offence that is unconnected with personal responsibility. The principle of "becoming all things to all men,"† surely extends to every particular of the *mode of address*, though not to one particle of the fundamental matter; and if the Apostle Paul was accustomed to speak from the immediate impulse of his mind, it is hard to believe, that he who felt himself "a debtor both to the Greeks and to the barbarians, both to the wise and to the unwise,"‡ would not have used a written composition to either of these classes, had it been necessary to answer his great end. Few would doubt the consistency of Henry Martyn's concession to the offence that was taken by his Indian congregation, at his extempore preaching—'saying, that he would give them a folio sermon book, if they would receive the word of God on that account.'§ Nor is the propriety of conformity to established usage doubted, in the occasions of *conciones ad clerum*, whether in University, Cathedral, or Visitation Pulpits, and where the appendage of a written composition might be made

* Exod. iv. 10—16.
† 1 Cor. ix. 22.
‡ Rom. i. 14.
§ Life, pp. 227, 228.

the vehicle of statements as faithful and as important, as had been usually delivered by the preacher through a more free medium.

The Writer, therefore, fully accords with Archbishop Secker's View of the question—'After all, every man, as the Apostle saith on a different occasion, hath his proper gift of God, one after this manner, another after that. Let each cultivate his own, and no one censure or despise his brother.'* This was Mr. Robinson's judgment of the matter—who with a decided preference for extempore preaching in his own case, 'taught his people to relish either; and to consider book or no book, as one of those circumstantials, in the fulfilment of the ordinance, which was of secondary, or rather of no moment.'† The conscientious Minister, therefore, will decide according to the best knowledge of the nature of his situation, the temper of his people, the character and suitableness of his individual talent—which mode is most adapted in his own case to subserve the grand purpose of his work. Perhaps upon a clear evidence of a general preference of extempore preaching with his own congregation, it might be his duty to attempt it—but in his ultimate decision the advice of one or more of his discerning brethren might be called in with special advantage.

* Charges, pp. 290, 291.
† Vaughan's Life of Robinson, p. 324.

CHAPTER VI.

THE SPIRIT OF SCRIPTURAL PREACHING.

A THOUGHTFUL study of the Gospels and the Acts of the Apostles, will convey the best illustrations of this subject. Our Lord's Ministry furnishes the perfect exemplification, of which the Apostolic Ministry exhibited a close detailed imitation; and therefore, as intrusted with the same commission, opposed by the same hindrances, and encouraged by the same promissory engagements with the first Ministers of the Christian Church, an attentive consideration of their spirit must be replete with most important instruction and support. A few leading particulars may be specified, which may be filled up with advantage even in the most contracted sphere of the Christian Ministry.

SECTION I.

BOLDNESS—THE SPIRIT OF SCRIPTURAL PREACHING.

OUR Lord's pungent addresses to the Scribes and Pharisees,* exhibit the boldness of Christian Ministrations. The same spirit in the Apostles was unaccountable upon human calculations,† and confounded their judges to their face.‡ Such was the spirit of Paul before Felix§—a prisoner on his trial for life—" no man

* See Matt. xxiii. † Acts. ii. 13.

‡ Acts iv. 13. See the power that rested upon this spirit, 29—33. xiv. 3. St. Paul's deep sense of its importance. Eph. vi. 19, 20. Col iv. 3, 4—the same spirit characterizing the Jewish prophets, 1 Kings xxi. 20. xxii. 14—25. 2 Chron. xvi. 7. xxiv. 20. Isaiah lviii. 1. lxv 1. with Rom. x. 20. Amos vii. 12, 14. Micah iii. 8. Matt. iii. 7. § Acts xxiv. 25.

standing by him"—hated even to death by the influential body of his countrymen, yet, mean and in peril as he was, did he look his Judge in the face, with the power of life and death in his hands; and remembering only the dignity of his office, deliver to this noble sinner and his guilty partner the most personal and offensive truths. How did this splendid example of Ministerial boldness "magnify his office!" For what can be more degrading to our Divine commission, than that we should fear the face of men? What unmindfulness does it argue of our Master's presence and authority, and of our high responsibilities, as "set for the defence of the gospel."* The independence, that disregards alike the praise and the dread of man, is indispensable for the integrity of the Christian Ministry.

Luther would have been tolerated on many truths of general application, but his bold statements of justification could not be endured. How different from Erasmus, who, though a lay-man, delivered his doctrines *ex cathedra*, yet with a worldly carefulness to avoid inconvenient offence. But the question is not, how our people may be pleased, but how they may be warned, instructed, and saved. And to keep offensive doctrines out of view, or to apologize for the occasional mention of them, or to guard against the rudeness of disquieting the conscience with unwelcome truth, to compromise with the world, to connive at fashionable sins, to be silent where the cause of God demands an open confession, this is not the spirit which honours our master, and which he "delighteth to honour."†

The *reproof of sin* is an important part of Ministerial

* Phil. i. 17.

† See some searching views on this subject, in a sermon entitled The Gospel Message, by Rev. W. Dealtry, lately published, pp. 24—26.

boldness. Even the courtesies of life never restrained our Lord from his office. The Pharisees' dinners were often made the vehicle of rebuke, and never used as the excuse for declining it.* Scriptural rules and exhortations are given in the Ministerial Epistles—that it should be, when occasion required, *public*† as a warning to others—*sharp*‡ as a means of conviction to the offender—with *authority*§ in our Master's name—with *love*‖ in the hope of ultimate restoration. It should, however, be aimed at the sin rather than at the sinner. There was no need for the Apostle to make any personal allusion to Felix. Conscience told the trembling criminal—"Thou art the man,"¶

This Ministerial boldness is fenced on either side by warning and encouragement.** Want we a further motive? Think of the despised Saviour in the judgment hall—"*before Pontius Pilate witnessing a good confession*,"†† an example of fidelity enough to make a coward bold.

The deficiency of this spirit weakens our respect and confidence with our people, by reducing us in their eyes to the mean character of time-servers, whose moral and religious integrity are alike suspected. Many who love the 'smooth things' we should 'prophesy,' would despise us in their hearts for this accommodation of conscience to their indulgencies. While the Christian boldness of a faithful Minister awes the haters of his message, and secures the confidence of the true flock of Christ, and the approbation of his conscience in the sight of God.

* Luke vii. 36—46. xi. 37—54.
† 1 Tim. v. 20.
‡ Titus i. 13.
§ Titus ii. 15.
‖ 1 Tim. v. 1. 2 Tim. ii. 24, 25.
¶ Acts xxiv. 25.
** Comp. Jer. i. 17—19. Ezek. ii. 6—8. 2 Tim. iv. 16 This thought seems to have been the last prop of Jeremiah's sinking spirit. chap. xx. 9—11.
†† 1 Tim. vi. 13.

SECTION II.

WISDOM—THE SPIRIT OF SCRIPTURAL PREACHING.

"WISDOM"—observes the wise king of Jerusalem, who had known its value in public instruction—"is profitable to direct."* It was a part of the furniture of our Divine Master for his Ministerial work,† to which both the multitude and his enemies bore ample testimony.‡ His sermons were fraught with solemn, weighty, unmingled truth. There was nothing disgustful, crude, indigested—but judicious appeals to Scripture, an intimate acquaintance with the heart, and a suitable adaptation of incidental occurrences and expressions to the great end of his mission;§ so that in every view it was the manifestation of "the wisdom of God." In the same spirit his Apostle testified to his own ministrations, "teaching every man *in all wisdom*, that he might present every man perfect in Christ Jesus."‖

This mode of "preaching Christ," must imply *a just and connected disposition of Scriptural truth.* "A wise master-builder" not only carefully lays a right foundation, but "takes heed how he builds thereupon"—distinguishing the different qualities of his materials,¶ avoiding the mixture of foundation and building work, placing the doctrine at the foundation, and forming the several duties as lively stones, growing

* Eccles. x. 10. with xii. 10. † Isaiah xi. 2, 3. l. 4.
‡ Luke iv. 22. xxi. 40. with John vii. 46.
§ This particular of the Ministry of Christ is admirably illustrated by the Bishop of Winchester, Minis. Char. of Christ, ch. vi.
‖ Col. i. 28. ¶ 1 Cor. iii. 10—15.

up into a goodly superstructure upon it. Thus will he guard against confounding what God has distinguished, and putting asunder "what God hath joined together"—often perhaps seeing reason to insist upon some points with more detail than others, but taking care to bring every part into its Scriptural prominence and connexion with the Christian system; confirming and improving the whole as "profitable for doctrine, reproof, correction, and instruction in righteousness."*

There is the greatest possible need of this entire exhibition of the Gospel. Many will patiently listen to the practical enforcements of Christian duty, who cannot endure the Scriptural statements of the Sovereignty of God, his free election of his people, the doctrine of justification by the righteousness of Christ, the utter insufficiency of works as the ground of trust, the helplessness of man in the act of turning to God, and the indispensable need of Divine influence to incline his heart. Many on the other hand receive the mysterious and offensive doctrines of the Gospel with the highest delight, while they revolt from the invitations of the Gospel, inculcations of the law as the rule of life, of evangelical repentance and holiness—as legal and unauthorized statements. Now both these extremes proceed from the same principle—a proud desire to receive a part only of the counsel of God. Both need the same corrective—a full, well proportioned, and connected display of Christian truth—opposing the notions of self-sufficiency without weakening the obligations to duty, and enforcing practical obligations, without entrenching upon the Divine Sovereignty, or the freeness of divine grace.

* 2 Tim. iii. 16.

From a deficiency of this wise distribution of truth, much and dangerous error has arisen. The foundations of evangelical holiness have been loosened by severing between the doctrine of grace, and its use and end; by leading men to rest upon its notions, while they interrupt its practical influence; by insinuating a carelessness of the evil and consequences of sin from the misconceived doctrines of Divine forgiveness. The wise Ministration of the Gospel connects the full display of Divine mercy with a deep and humbling sense of sin. A free pardon will be watered with tears; forgiven sin is detested and crucified; and the Gospel is clearly seen to be the only principle of holiness and love for the conviction of the self-justiciary and Antinomian, and for the direction of the perplexed inquirer after truth.'*

The exhibition of a correct standard belongs to this subject. We should be careful not to set it too low or too high—to lay nothing down as evidences of the Christian character, which may belong to a decorous, amiable, natural disposition; and on the other hand to bring forth the lowest germ of Christian sincerity as a decisive evidence of Divine operation; distinguishing between the degrees and the existence of grace, and remembering that there are babes, as well as young men and fathers in the family of God, and that "the trees of righteousness of the Lord's planting" rise, but by slow degrees, to the height of the cedar of Lebanon.† By a deviation from the Scriptural standard on

* Comp. Rom. v. vi.

† 'The line of demarcation is sometimes so strictly drawn, that it would seem as if no attainments, which fall short of a prescribed standard, were to be accounted as indicative of the existence of any religious feeling. It would be more consonant to our Lord's example, if when appearances on the whole are favourable, those

either side, we should "slay the souls that should not die, and save the souls alive that should not live—making the heart of the righteous sad, whom the Lord hath not made sad, and strengthening the hands of the wicked, by promising him life."*

We may here also remark the importance of a correct *application of our message to different characters.* How much wisdom is needed to discern the particular truth, the argument, the method, the words, and the utterance best adapted for the spiritual blessing of our people! The composition of our sermons should be such, that the lowest may understand, and the most intelligent may have no cause to complain—so that neither the weak may be offended, nor the captious be unconsciously encouraged. In the matter also of our discourses, the timing of things well, the choice of the best seasons of instruction, the dealing of it out in an attractive dress, the selection of the most apt and striking illustrations—all is of the highest importance. Hence the considerable difference, which is observable in our Lord's first discourses to the Scribes and Pharisees, to the multitude, and to his own disciples; as well as in his more private treatment of individual cases. The Apostle also was anxious to accommodate the method of his Ministerial application to the temper of his people. He was ready to "change his voice" to the occasion, and to "come to them with

who are yet lacking one thing, were to be brought to a clearer knowledge of the way of salvation, by forbearance and seasonable admonition. If the Apostle thought it necessary to exhort believers to *add to their faith* virtue, and to virtue knowledge, &c. he must have contemplated the possibility, that those, who might afterwards become *thoroughly furnished unto all good works*, had been formerly deficient in some of the Christian graces.' Bishop of Winchester—Ministerial Character of Christ, pp, 232, 233.

* Ezek. xiii. 19, 22.

a rod, or in love, and in the spirit of meekness."* Thus must the Christian Minister adopt the dispensation of his commission to the different temperaments of his people. Most unskilful would he be, were he to apply the corrosives of the Law instead of the balm of the Gospel. This would be, unlike his master, to "break the bruised reed, and to quench the smoking flax." On the other hand, most unfaithful would he be, were he not to rouse slumbering sinners with "the terrors of the Lord," but rather to soothe them into a deeper slumber by an exclusive display of Christian privileges. He must indeed be skilled in personating a variety of characters, becoming a Boanerges or a Barnabas—having a word for the worldly and the spiritual, for the self-righteous and the contrite, for the wise and for the unwise, for the weak and for the strong, for the presumptuous and for the doubting, for the mourner and for the rejoicing—"a word fitly spoken" for each, which will be "like apples of gold in pictures of silver."† "Of some," that have been beguiled, he must "have compassion, making a difference" between them and obstinate offenders. "Others" he must "save with fear, pulling them out of the fire."‡ It will not indeed be always wise to persevere in the same treatment with the same cases. Spiritual, like medical applications, require occasional change to sustain the system in continued operation. In the temporal husbandry, the same grain cannot be sown successive years upon the same lands. Much wisdom is required in varying the applications of the Gospel according to ever-varying exigencies of the Ministry. 'A preacher must carefully observe the manners,

* Gal. iv. 20. 1 Cor. iv. 21. † Prov. xxv. 11.
‡ Jude 22, 23.

customs, and inclinations of those whom he would persuade, that he may gain an easier admission for the truth into their mind.'*

Not less illustrative of the Scriptural wisdom of the pulpit Ministry is the *adaptation of instruction to the different stages of Christian progress in the Gospel.* The natural constitution would be seriously injured by a course of unsuitable diet. The use of strong meat to babes (contrasting the Apostle's illustration†) so far from conveying nutriment, would be positively injurious. A condescension to our spiritual capacities was a prominent feature of our Lord's Ministry both with the people and with his disciples. His public and private Ministry were strongly characterized by this wise and condescending adaptation.‡ How remarkable is the contrast between the elementary character of the sermon on the Mount, and his latter discourses, evidently adapted to a more advanced stage of Christian knowledge. The doctrine of repentance, the main subject of his early Ministry, was deemed by the Apostle unsuitable for a more matured scheme of Ministerial instruction.§ Dr. Owen well observes—'It is the duty of Ministers of the Gospel to take care, not only that the doctrine which they preach be true, but also that it be seasonable with respect to the state and condition of their hearers. Herein *consists no small part of that wisdom, which is required in* the dispensation of the word.'‖ In our private Ministration we can

* Quesnel on Acts xvii. 23.

† Heb. v. 11—14. Si pro viribus suis alatur infans, fiet—ut crescendo plus capiat; si modum suæ capacitatis excedat, deficit antequam crescat. Aug de Civit, Dei. Lib. xii.

‡ Mark iv. 33. John xvi. 12. with 1 Cor. iii. 1—3.

§ Comp. Matt. iv. 17. with Heb. vi. 1, 2.

‖ Owen on Heb. vi. 1.

individualize each particular case; but in public addresses, where hearers of different capacities and states listen to the same statements, and where invisible agency is in constant operation to divert the word from the course to which it might have been accurately directed, the difficulty is painfully felt. How often is the tender reed bruised by a word of seasonable application to the thoughtless sinner! while the promises, too hastily rejected by the perplexed self-condemning penitent, are eagerly seized by the presumptuous, to bind more strongly the spirit of slumber upon their consciences.

This mode may be sometimes unjustly exposed to the imputation of unfaithfulness. 'Some men,' as Mr. Cecil remarks, 'seem to think, that in the choice of a wise way there lurks always a trimming disposition.'* There is doubtless considerable danger of adulterating the Gospel, in the well-intentioned endeavour to render it applicable to the endless diversity of cases. But there is an important distinction between rational contrivance and Christian accommodation. As Mr. Cecil again remarks—'It is a foolish project—*to avoid giving offence*; but it is our duty to avoid giving *unnecessary* offence.' To seek to be acceptable is by no means inconsistent with Christian faithfulness. "To find out acceptable words" was the study of the royal Preacher.† And after this model of instruction, how important is it

* Cecil's Remains.

† Eccles. xii. 10. The first nine chapters of the Book of Proverbs, as Dr. Wardlaw admirably observes, 'present us with a most interesting specimen of these acceptable words. There is in them an inimitable union of admonitory fidelity and enticing and subduing kindness. Like Paul, he "exhorts, and comforts, and charges, as a father doth his children." The whole soul of the writer is breathed out in the earnestness of benevolent desire.' Wardlaw on Eccles. xii. 10.

avoid a manner and statement that would be needlessly irritating and repulsive, and to distribute unpalatable truths in the sweetness of persuasion, compassion, and sympathy—"In doctrine, showing incorruptness"*—in mode, acceptableness. The preacher's "acceptable word were upright—even words of truth;" so consistent is Ministerial fidelity with the exercise of Christian wisdom.

Indeed we must never forget, that the Scripture exhibits different modes of preaching the Gospel with equal simplicity and faithfulness. What a diversity of gifts do we observe in the Apostles? Peter acknowledges it in the case of himself and his beloved brother Paul.† The contrast between the Epistles of Paul and James, upon the same doctrine of justification, is even more striking. In the general complexion of his Epistles, James, though less doctrinal than his brother Paul, yet wrote under the inspiration of the same Spirit, and could commend himself by *his* "manifestation of the truth," with equal confidence "in the sight of God." Contrast again Paul with himself—Paul at Antioch and Paul at Athens—Paul before Agrippa and before Felix—his Epistles to the Gentile churches and to his own countrymen; not communicating different systems of truth, but the same system in different modes; not abandoning any part of the system, but adapting the mode of its distribution to the circumstances of the respective churches, in all cases "according to the wisdom given unto him,"‡ and in all his Ministrations with Divine power and success.

We may here also refer to *the influence of our Christian temperament upon the character of our Min-*

* Tit. ii. 7. † 2 Pet. iii. 15.
‡ Acts xiii. xvii. xxvi. xxiv.

istrations. It is natural, and under due regulation important, to carry the peculiar bias of our mind into our Ministry. Every man is formed to think, and speak and write in a manner of his own, and he will be far more useful in preserving his own manner, (improved by comparison with others, but never wholly forsaken,) than by enslaving himself in some popular mode. But let it be known, watched, balanced. It has its evils as well as its advantages. A speculative mind is apt to speculate in sacred Ministration—to discuss subjects in a train of argumentation, which divests them of their heavenly unction and simplicity. An accomplished mind may be in danger even in the Evangelical field of furnishing more food for the intellect than for the immortal soul. A doctrinal preacher has his favourite chapters and class of subjects, which comprize the whole of his Ministrations. An experimental Preacher speaks acccording to his own spiritual exercises. If he has been awakened by the terrors of the law, his preaching will probably partake more of the character of alarm than of tenderness and love. If he has been drawn by the bands of love, he may be led almost unconsciously to omit the persuasive influence of "the terrors of the Lord."* It is important to preach from the heart, yet to form the character of our Ministry, not in the frame-work of our own experience, but according to the mould of the Word of God. Otherwise it will have little sympathy with Christians of a somewhat different character, and still less communication with the ignorant and unconverted. A practical Preacher has seen the looseness of profession resulting from exclusive views of doctrine or experience, and

* 2 Cor. v. 11.

perhaps leaves his statements bare, or imperfectly connected with either. An applicatory Preacher may fail in giving clear and connected statements of doctrine. A discriminating Preacher may be in danger of perplexing his hearers with refined distinctions, drawn more immediately from his own spiritual exercises than from the clear system of the Word of God. A decided Preacher will need a deep tincture of humility, forbearance and love, else his "zeal will be without knowledge," and his labour worse than lost. It is therefore an important exercise of Ministerial wisdom not to indulge the tone of preaching which accords with the bias of our mind, without great self-distrust, much and earnest prayer, and a clearly warranted assurance, that it passes beyond the bounds of our own individual experience and indulgence—embracing within its range alike the converted and the unconverted; equally calculated to awaken and to establish; to "add to the Church," and to strengthen in the Church, "such as shall be saved."

SECTION III.

PLAINNESS—THE SPIRIT OF SCRIPTURAL PREACHING.

THE spirit of preaching consists in its adaptation to the subjects of instruction. It may be spiritual in its statements, experimental in its character, and practical in its enforcement. It may have all the features of discrimination and decision. But if it is not intelligible in its mode of address—falling in with the familiar ideas of common life, it has no application to the objects proposed. Philip Henry was deeply sensible of the necessity of plain preaching—'We study how

to speak,' said he, at the commencement of his Ministry, 'that you may understand us; and I never think that I can speak plain enough, when I am speaking about souls and their salvation.'* The discourses of our Lord are a perfect model of simplicity. Never was there a more plain and popular Preacher. The most sublime truths are illustrated by the most familiar comparisons. Most of his parables were drawn from objects passing before him. Even children's play was made to minister conviction to his hearers.† The fields, under his observant eye, were made fruitful in spiritual instruction,‡ and wherever he moved, he was the Teacher of the people according to their way and capacity. His Apostles closely followed in his steps. They felt themselves "debtors to the unwise," as well as "to the wise."§ They would neither sink beneath the dignity of their subject, nor soar above the capacities of their people. They "used great plainness of speech."‖ Their mode of teaching, though with considerable difference of style, was brought down within the reach of the lowest intelligence. Paul dealt much in illustration, never remote, and always on subjects with which he knew his people to be conversant. The Grecian games furnished useful and pointed instruction to the churches in the neighbourhood of these pastimes, or who were conversant with them.¶ James, in the same style of writing, crowded together the most familiar illustrations in the exhibition of a single point. Peter and John are plain and didactic. Jude, as far as

* Life, p. 26. Compare Orton's Life of Doddridge, chap. ii.
† Matt. xi. 16—19. ‡ Matt. xiii. § Rom. i. 14.
‖ 2 Cor. iii. 12. Comp. 1 Cor. xiv. 19. 'Habent sacræ Scripturæ sed non ostendunt, eloquentiam.' August. de Doctr. Christ. Lib. iv.—especially and most justly recommended by Milner to the study of Ministers. ¶ 1 Cor. ix. Phil. iii.

we can judge from one short epistle, is energetic and expressive. All however, have, in common, a great care and success in making themselves understood. Their expressions and turns of sentiment are distinguished by a remarkable perspicuity, and are never above the ordinary level. The discourses of the Christian Fathers were generally of the same character. Augustine's discourses are remarked to be the most simple of all his works.* They were often interrupted to explain what might seem to be beyond the capacity of his hearers, who would sometimes express their intelligent satisfaction with his meaning. The Homilies of Chrysostom and others of that day were so called, as being delivered in a familiar and conversational mode. The sermons of our Reformers, judging from the book of Homilies and other specimens, and making allowance for the phraseology of the times, are admirable specimens of a style equally simple, forcible, and interesting. Luther tells us, that when asked by Dr. Albert the best way of preaching before the elector—'I said, let all your preaching be in the most plain manner. Look not to the prince, but to the plain, simple, and unlearned people, of which cloth the prince himself is also made. If I in my preaching should have regard to Philip Melancthon, or other learned doctors, I should work but little good. I preach in the simplest sort to the unskilful, and the same giveth content to all.'†

One of the ancient prophets was commanded—

* See quotation from his sermons in the next page.

† Table Talk. It was one of his sayings—'Optimi ad vulgus hi concionatores, qui pueriliter, populariter, et simplissime docent.' See a beautiful anecdote characteristic of this great reformer, giving advice to Bucer on this subject. Scott's Continuation of Milner, vol. i. 216, 217. Adams, in his Life of Luther, has inserted some homely rhymes, which he composed for the common people. And 'for these beggarly ballads,' says a shrewd writer,

"Write the vision, and *make it plain upon tables, that he may run that readeth it.*"* That this command may have its due effect, we must pay attention to *style, subject-matter, and mode of address.*

A plain style is most suitable for the expression of plain things—'Parenthesis and circumlocution, deprive expression of its edge, and the idea, attenuated by frequent tropes and figures, arrives at the mind of the hearer, like an arrow spent in its flight, and rather serves to amuse than to impress.'† Archbishop Secker judiciously recommends, as a means of winning the attention of our people—'to make our sermons extremely clear. Terms and phrases'—he remarks to his Clergy—may be familiar to you which are quite unintelligible to them, and I fear this happens much oftener than we suspect; therefore guard against it. Your expressions 'may be very common, without being low; yet employ the lowest, provided they are not ridiculous, rather than not be understood.'‡ It is a frequent

'Luther may receive a greater reward at the last day, than for whole shelves of learned folios. Vanity will make a man speak and write learnedly, but piety only can prevail upon a good scholar to simplify his speech for the sake of the vulgar.' Rev. R. Robinson's Notes on Claude's Essay.

* Hab. ii. 2. † Budd on Infant Baptism, pp. 493, 494.

‡ Charges, pp. 273, 274. Augustine continually reverts to this subject. He did not scruple to say—'Melius est, ut nos reprehendant grammatici, quam ut non intelligant populi.' In Ps. cxxxviii. Thus in one of his sermons to the same purport—'Rogo humiliter, ut contentæ sint eruditæ aures vestræ verba rustica æquanimiter sustinere, dummodo totus grex domini simplici, et ut ita dicam, pedestri sermone, pabulum spirituale possit accipere; et, quia imperiti et simplices ad scholasticorum altitudinem non possunt ascendere, eruditi se dignentur ad illorum ignorantiam se inclinare.' Quesnel remarks—'That a man need not fear stooping too low, when he considers himself as the dispenser of the mysteries of abased wisdom. The gospel is more for the poor and simple than for refined wits; and yet a Minister thereof is sometimes, as one may say, afraid of being understood by the simple, lest he should not be admired by the learned.' On Mark iv. 33.

mistake to take too much for granted. Fenelon's remark is applicable to many Protestant congregations, 'that there are always three quarters of an ordinary congregation, who do not know those first principles of religion, with which the preacher supposes every one to be fully instructed.'* We must remember that our commission extends to the explanation of the words, as well as of the things, of God. The meaning is discovered in the word, and cannot be discovered without it. There are many important Scriptural terms, whose meaning is little, if at all, understood by the mass; so that a want of verbal explanations is often a great hindrance to edification. We must not judge the extent of the people's information by our own. A popular view of the simplest elementary principles is the best introduction to more extended views of truth.

Nor is this style of simplicity degrading to the most intellectual mind. We could do no more with "the tongues of Angels," than communicate our ideas intelligibly to one another—an exercise, which many excellent preachers of literary endowments have found to require considerable pains and diligence. Luther used to say—'To *preach plain and simply* is a great art.'† Archbishop Usher observed, 'It requires all our learning to make things plain.' Bishop Wilkins observes, 'The greatest learning is to be seen in the greatest plainness. The more clearly we understand anything ourselves, the more easily can we expound it

* Dialogues on Eloquence, iii.

† Table Talk. Quintillian excellently observes, that our meaning, 'like the light of the sun, should obtrude itself upon the eyes of the ignorant, not only without any pains to search for it, but, as it were, whether he will or not.' Institut. Lib. viii. Rollin has the same illustration. Belles Letters, vii.

to others.'* Bishop Hurd charged his clergy to the same purport—'Your sermons cannot well be too plain; and I need not say unto you, who hear me, that to frame a discourse in this way, as it is the usefullest way of preaching, so it will afford full scope and exercise for all the talents, which the ablest of us may possess.'† Archbishop Tillotson is said to have been in the habit of reading his sermons to an illiterate old woman of plain sense who lived with him, and of altering his words and expressions, till he had brought the style down to her level.' 'The story'—Professor Campbell observes—'is much to the prelate's honour; for however incompetent such judges might be of the composition, the doctrine, or the arguments, they are certainly the most competent judges of what terms and phrases fall within the apprehension of the vulgar, the class to which they belong.'‡ Not indeed that a naked simplicity of style is to be recommended. Our Lord's example, as that of the simplest of Preachers, seems to recommend an infusion of the parabolical style into our discourses. And indeed natural images are found most useful in the elucidation of spiritual things—in themselves obscure to the mind's eye, but thus rendered more palpable by the exhibition of them to the senses. To obtain a correct mode of illustration, the study of the Scripture metaphors is of the highest importance in marking their exquisite adaptation to the subjects of reference. Remote images should be abstained

* Wilkins's Eccles. p. 168. The character that Photius gave of the preaching of Athanasius will confirm this point. 'In sermonibus ubique in locutione clarus est, et brevis, et simplex, *acutus tamen et altus*.'

† Bishop Hurd's Charges.

‡ Campbell on Pulpit Eloquence, Lect. iii. Compare Fenelon on Eloquence, ut supra.

from, as those from which no clear light can be borrowed. Nothing ridiculous, light, or trifling, must be encouraged, as being utterly inconsistent with the dignity and holiness of the Sacred Volume. Only that which is serious has a tendency to permanent edification.*

The vanity of learned preaching is proved by its unproductiveness. The most holy preachers are commonly the plainest and the most successful.† We might as well think of adding clearness to light, as hope to embellish the simplicity of the Gospel by rhetorical expression.‡ Embellishments of this kind, if allowed at all, should be sparingly used.§ King James aptly compared them in public discourses 'to the red and blue flowers, that pester the corn, when it stands in the fields, more noisome to the growing crop, than beautiful to the beholding eye.'‖ The Apostle, laying much stress upon "words easy to be understood," would have rebuked the frequent use of technical phraseology as contemptible and most responsible trifling—in many cases "speaking in an unknown tongue," and "shutting

* See Bowles' Past. Evang. Lib. ii. c. 10.

† Archbishop Leighton, after hearing a plain and homely sermon with entire satisfaction, observed—'This good man seems in earnest to catch souls. The measure of speech,' he remarked, 'ought to be the character of the audience, which is made up for the most part of illiterate persons.'

‡ See Jer. xxiii. 28, 29. What has been said of commentators may apply to preachers of this class—that their subjects were plain until they expounded them.

§ Augustine's remark was—'Non ornamenta, sed documenta.' De doctr. Christian, Lib. iv. ut supra. Not that he was wholly averse to ornament. His idea of the style of discourses was most just—'Nec inornata relinquitur, nec indecenter ornatur.'

‖ Preface to his Remonstrance—'Preachers,' remarks Bishop Taylor, 'are to feed the people, not with gay tulips and useless daffodils, but with the bread of life and medicinal plants, springing from the margin of the fountain of salvation.'

up the kingdom of heaven against men."* Terms of this kind—as Professor Campbell remarks—'give a learned dress to religion; but it is a dress, that very ill befits an institution intended for the comfort and direction of all, even of the lowest ranks.† 'Nothing indeed,' as Jerome long since observed—'is so easy as to impose upon an illiterate audience, whose habit is to admire what they do not understand.'‡ But the garb used for this purpose 'is often no other than a cloak for ignorance. And of all kinds of ignorance, learned ignorance is undoubtedly the most contemptible.'§ Indeed nothing can be more foreboding to the church than the extensive influence of such a paralyzing and unevangelical system. The true glory and dignity of the pulpit would sink into a stage exhibition of self-display. 'The sword of the Spirit' (to use a terse illustration of an old Divine) would be 'put into a velvet scabbard, that it cannot prick and wound the heart.'

Plainness in the choice of our subjects marks also the spirit of Scriptural preaching. We may here attend to

* 1 Cor. xiv. 11—19. Matt. xxiii. 13.

† On Systematic Theolgy, Lect. iii. See the sensible advice that Mr. Richmond received from his College Tutor on this subject. Life, p. 152.

‡ Hieron. ad Nepot.

§ Campbell, ut supra. 'An affected obscurity of style,' Baxter remarks, 'makes a fool admire the preacher's learning, but it will make a wise man wonder at his hypocrisy or folly.' Kirke White justly remarked of a preacher whom he had lately heard—'I think in particular he has one great fault, that is, *elegance. He is not sufficiently plain.* Remember,' adds he, 'we do not mount the pulpit to say fine things, or eloquent things. We have there to proclaim the good tidings of salvation to fallen man, to point out the way to eternal life, to exhort, to cheer, to support, the suffering sinner: these are the glorious topics, upon which we have to enlarge: and will these permit the tricks of oratory, or the studied beauties of eloquence? Shall truths and counsels like these be couched in terms, which the poor and ignorant cannot comprehend?'—See his Remains.

the excellent advice of the Primitive Bishop Wilson —'Avoid,' says he, 'such discourses and subjects, as would divert the mind without instructing it. Never consult your own fancy in the choice of subjects, but the necessities of the flock. I would rather send away the hearers smiting their breasts, than please the most learned audience with a fine sermon against any vice. With what truth can it be said, that "the sheep hear your voice," when you speak matters above their capacities, or in language and tones which they do not understand. It is too often, that preachers perplex those whom they should instruct. There is a great deal of difference between people admiring the preacher, and being edified by his sermons.'* *Metaphysical preaching* would come under these remarks. Dr. Dwight (a man whose mind had a strong natural bias of this character) admirably observes—'All preaching of this kind is chiefly useless, and commonly mischievous. No ordinary congregation ever understood, to any valuable purpose, metaphysical subjects; and no congregation, it is believed, was ever much edified by a metaphysical manner of discussion.'† We

* Sacra Privata, Works, vol. i. 253. 'Let all your performances,' said the excellent Matthew Henry, 'be plain and Scriptural. Choose for your pulpit subjects the plainest and most needful truths, and endeavour to make them plainer.'—Williams' Life, p. 122.

† Dwight's Theology, v. 209, 210. 'That which metaphysical preaching teaches'—as he elsewhere remarks—'may be true, and the arguments used to support it may be sound, but the distinctions are so subtle, and the reasoning so abstruse and difficult, that the hearer's attention to the truth is lost in his attention to the preacher's ingenuity; his mind prevented from feeling what is intended by the absorption of his thoughts in the difficulties of the argument; and his heart chilled by the cold manner in which all such discussions are conducted. The metaphysician, whether aware of it or not, is employed in displaying his own ingenuity, and not in disclosing and confirming the truth of God.' Sermons, Vol. ii. 461. Comp. Burnet's Past. Care, ch. ix.

would not encourage a superficial treatment of more elaborate subjects ; but let all reasoning be grounded upon the simple principles of Scripture ; rather than upon inductive or excursive philosophy. All subjects of 'intrusion into things which we have not seen'*—all questions not directly tending to edification (such as the Apostle denominates "old wives' fables," "vain babblings," "foolish questions"†) are to be avoided. The weeping prophet mourned over his desolated city —"Thy prophets have seen *vain and foolish things* for thee."‡ And every serious Christian must respond to this complaint, when he sees some Ministers (to use the quaint but expressive language of Bishop Hall) 'picking straws in Divinity ;' others substituting husks for the bread of life, scholastic or metaphysical distinctions, curious researches into antiquity, ingenious dissertations upon the fitness of things, abstract proofs of the evidences of Christianity, elucidations merely critical of the sacred text, for the simple and palatable exhibition of the "truth as it is in Jesus." 'The hungry sheep look up and are not fed.'

We might refer to *the plausible ground of dissent* arising from this preaching, as a minor consideration for Ministers of the Establishment,§ (for our people will

* Col. ii. 18. † 1 Tim. iv 7. vi. 20. Tit. iii. 9. ‡ Lam. ii. 14.

§ Dr. Johnson (see Boswell's Life) with much truth ascribes the success of the Methodists, in drawing away the Members of the Establishment, to their plain mode of address. King James in a curious document, entitled, 'The Reason of the King's Direction for Preaching and Preachers,' traces the many defections to Popery, and Anabaptism, or other points of separation, to the 'lightness, affectedness, and unprofitableness of the preachers in his day, 'mustering up of much reading, or displaying of their wits ;' leaving the people's mind, 'for all this airy nourishment, no better than mere table books, ready to be filled up with the catechism of the Popish priest, or the pamphlets of the Anabaptists.'

soon be tired of hearing barbarism in an English dialect*) but a far *higher responsibility* is contracted than *dissent*. It may be that the grammarian, the critic, the theologian, approve of our discourses. But in preaching to an illiterate congregation of perishing sinners, is not the grand vehicle of communication wanting—"words easy to be understood?" They do not understand their preacher—and they "are destroyed for lack of knowledge." For how can they be saved by the preaching of the Gospel in an unknown tongue? And of how little an account will be the reputation of an accurate logician, deep theologian, or orthodox Divine, under the weight of this awful charge!

A plain mode of address is also included in the spirit of preaching. A want of plain dealing with our people will inevitably betray their souls and ours with them. We are engaged with them on subjects connected with eternity, on which mistakes are so various and so fatal. It is of far higher moment that the watchman should blow the trumpet loudly than elegantly. Nothing is done until we bring them into immediate contact with their imminent, unseen, unsuspected danger. Let this plainness embrace all the variety of illustration, argumentation, appeal, and entreaty. Let it include the enforcement of every motive of terror and love, of warning and encouragement. But let there be a careful separation from meretricious embellishments,† a freedom from a false scrupulosity of tenderness, and an unflinching devotedness to the one object of the Christian Ministry, to apply the message of the Gospel in

* See 1 Cor. xiv. 11.

† Bishop Stillingfleet compares this mode of treatment to 'stroking the consciences of people with feathers dipped in oil.' Duties and Rights of Parochial Clergy, p. 30.

intelligible and uncompromising terms—to pursue sin and Satan in a course of unwearied warfare, until they are dispossessed of all their strong holds, and "every thought is brought into captivity unto the obedience of Christ."

SECTION IV.

FERVENCY—THE SPIRIT OF SCRIPTURAL PREACHING.

If it be natural to express ourselves with earnestness upon subjects of deep and acknowledged interest—much more in the delivery of the Gospel commission. 'Nothing,' says Baxter, 'is more indecent than a dead preacher, speaking to dead sinners the living truth of the living God.' It were surely better to subject ourselves to the misapprehension of men "besides themselves,"* than not to commend so immensely momentous a Ministry with some evidence of personal impression. As a matter of life and death—of eternal life and eternal death—it is connected with the most powerful motives, and acts upon the most influential principles of the heart. Charles V. remarked of one of the German Reformers—'He preached with such spirit and devotion, as might almost serve to make the very stones weep.' Such was the spirit of our Divine Master,† and of his chosen Apostles.‡ This spirit in

* 2 Cor. v. 13. Comp. Acts ii. 12, 13. 'So long as our zeal takes not its colour from human infirmities and human passions, but is regulated by the word of God; so long as we tread in the steps of those who "did all things decently and in order," far from having to apologize for our zeal, we should think that we act unworthily of our cause, if we possessed it not.' The Gospel Message, by Rev. W. Dealtry, p. 21.

† John ii. 17. ‡ Acts xvii. 16.

Epaphras was doubtless the hidden spring of his success.* The same spirit constituted the main power of Whitfield's Ministry. There have been men of like unction, faith, and prayer—men whose views of the gospel have been equally comprehensive, and whose love for souls has been equally fervent; but it was the expression of his whole soul portrayed in his countenance,† the solemnity of his address, the deep feeling from within bursting through at every pore, streaming in his eyes, and breathing an energy of love throughout the effusions of his overflowing heart—that convinced the listening throngs that he was not trifling with them. They caught sympathy with his natural eloquence, and, in thousands of instances, "the flint was turned into a fountain of waters," and his Ministry, to a large extent, was life from the dead "to his fellow-sinners." 'This faculty of moving hearers thus,' Archbishop Secker remarks, 'is a most valuable blessing. And such as have but little of it, may considerably improve it, by labouring to affect themselves more deeply with what they would say, and thinking what methods of saying it will be most persuasive.' But, as he elsewhere observes, 'smooth discourses,' to our people, 'containing little

* Col. i. 7. with iv. 12, 13.

† The description given of an old foreign preacher would give an accurate sketch of Whitfield in the pulpit. 'Vivida in eo omnia fuerunt: vivida vox, vividi oculi, vividi manus, gestus omnes vividi.' His ingenious confessions at the close of life, of a tincture of enthusiasm, and an occasional admixture of his own spirit with his Ministry, were most characteristic of Christian humility As Fuller memorialized the celebrated Wickliff in his characteristic style—'I intend neither to deny, dissemble, defend, or excuse any of his faults. "We have this treasure," says the Apostle, "in *earthen* vessels;" and he that shall endeavour to prove a pitcher of clay to be a pot of gold, will take great pains to small purpose. Yea, should I be over-officious to retain myself to plead for Wickliff's faults, that glorious saint would sooner chide than thank me.' Church History, Book iv.

that awakens their drowsy attention, little that enforces on them plainly and home "what they must do to be saved," leave them as ignorant and unreformed as ever, and only lull them into a fatal security.'* Even Bishop Warburton decides, that 'a pathetic address to the passions and affections of penitent hearers is perhaps the most operative of all the various species of instruction.'† George Herbert's Country Parson, 'when he preacheth, procures attention by all possible art:—by earnestness of speech, it being natural to men to think, that where there is much earnestness, there is something worth hearing.'‡ Nothing indeed can be more repugnant to the simple dignity of the Ministerial character, than attempts at theatrical display, or affectation of emotion, that has no correspondence with the heart. Preaching is not, as some appear to consider it, the work of the lungs, or the mimickry of gesture, or the impulse of uncontroulable feeling; but the exercise of love, the spiritual energy of a heart constrained by the love of Christ, and devoted to the care of those immortal souls, for whom Christ died. Yet it may be presumed, that the habit of realizing our Master's presence, and the awful responsibility vested in us, will find expression in something beyond the tone of tame seriousness and general accuracy of pulpit decorum.§ The Country Parson is described as finding the people 'thick and heavy, and hard to raise to a point of zeal and fervency, and needing a mountain of fire to kindle

* Charges, pp. 284, 252.

† Directions to Students of Theology. ‡ Chapter vii.

§ 'While I have any reverence for Scripture, or any knowledge of human nature, I shall never affect to speak of the glories of Christ, and of the eternal interests of man, as coldly as if I were reading a lecture of mathematics, or relating an experiment in natural philosophy.' Dr. Doddridge—Orton's Life, ch. v.

them.' He recommends therefore most beautifully, the 'dipping and seasoning all our words and sentences in our hearts, before they come into our mouths, truly, affecting and cordially expressing all that we can say, so that our auditors may plainly perceive that every word is heart-deep.'* A lively impression of interest seems the natural result of a cordial belief of the Gospel, and therefore a want of expression of this interest as naturally conveys a suspicion of the credibility of our message. For who could bring a *true* report of a fire, or of any extraordinary news, with cold indifference? And can we wonder that a cold delivery of our instructions should produce in our people an incredulity of their truth, or at least of their importance; that they should consider it to be a work of office, for which we are paid, rather than as a matter of personal concern to themselves: and that, with such impressions, they should want the disposition necessary to give to preaching its effect—a desire to hear? It has been well remarked—that 'the really useful man in winning souls to Christ is he, who is so penetrated with the value of the doctrines of the Gospel, as to persuade by the zeal and sincerity of his manners, when a less earnest mode of teaching would have failed to convince.'† Phlegmatic constitutions are not indeed capable of much excitement; but incessant prayer and watchfulness will have their effect in resisting constitutional languor, and in awakening an active impulse over our public exercises, in the evidence of their immediate connexion with our own personal conviction.

A want of fervency in our Ministrations is a serious hindrance to their efficiency. For though it is the

* Chapter vii.

† Bishop of Winchester's Ministerial Character of Christ, p. 70.

same word, however preached, yet an earnest delivery adds to the naked truth the sensible exhibition of Divine love, and moves one of the most enlivining principles of conviction. On the other hand—as a sensible writer has observed—'the monotonous wearisome sound of a single bell may be almost as soon expected to excite moral impressions, as the general tenor of public discourses, drowsily composed, and drowsily delivered.'* Our people want their hearts to be addressed as well as their understandings. Arguments may enlighten and convince, but there is a counter-working bias against their direct influence or persuasion. However this fervid spirit may be mistaken for enthusiasm, it is only the expresston of a heart deeply impressed with the conviction that religion is a matter of the first moment, and of immediate concern.† But which of us is not constrained to allow the inconsistency of apparent earnestness in the pulpit, with the general habit of cold and lifeless affections? To ascend the pulpit with a heart full of life, zeal, and love, is not a matter of course; yet, when "out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh," what unction seems to

* Jerningham's Essay on the Eloquence of the English Pulpit, prefixed to a Translation of Select Sermons from Bossuet.

† This is well borne out and illustrated by an eminent writer, who has never been suspected of giving encouragement to enthusiasm—'The chief characteristic of the eloquence suited to the pulpit, as distinguished from the other kinds of public speaking, appear to me to be these two—gravity and *warmth*. The serious nature of the subjects belonging to the pulpit requires gravity—*their importance to mankind requires warmth*.' Dr. Blair's Lectures, Lect. xxix.—On the Eloquence of the pulpit. Again he remarks—'Gravity and warmth united form that character of preaching which the French call *onction*—the affecting, penetrating, interesting manner, flowing from a strong sensibility of heart in the Preacher to the importance of those truths which he delivers, and an earnest desire that they may make a full impression on the hearts of his hearers.'

pervade the word! what a power of sympathy affects our people!

Baxter's impassioned pleadings show what our addresses ought to be in order to give full effect to our message. 'How thin'—exclaims he—'are those Ministers, that are serious in this work? Nay, how mightily do the best fail in this! Do we cry out of men's disobedience to the Gospel "in the demonstration of the Spirit," and deal with sin as the destroying fire in our towns, and by force pull men out of it? Do we persuade our people, as those should, who "know the terrors of the Lord?" Do we press Christ, and regeneration, and faith, and holiness, believing, that without these men can never have life? Do our bowels yearn over the ignorant, careless, and obstinate multitude? When we look them in the face, do our hearts melt over them, lest we should never see their faces in rest? Do we, as St. Paul, "tell them weeping," of their fleshly and earthly disposition? and "teach them publicly, and from house to house," at all seasons and with many tears? And do we entreat them, as for their soul's salvation? Or rather, do we not study to gain the approbation of critical hearers, as if a Minister's business were of no more weight, but to tell a smooth tale for an hour, and look no more after the people till the next sermon? Does not carnal prudence control our fervour, and make our discourses lifeless on subjects the most piercing? How gently we handle those sins, which will so cruelly handle our people's souls! In a word—our want of seriousness about the things of heaven, charms the souls of men into formality, and brings them into this customary careless hearing, which undoes them.' 'I know not what others think,' says he in another place, 'but for my own part, I am

ashamed of my stupidity, and wonder at myself that I deal not with my own and others' souls, as one that looks for the great day of the Lord, and that I can have room for almost any other thoughts or words, and that such astonishing matters do not wholly take me up. I marvel how I can preach of them slightly and coldly, and how I can let men alone in their sins, and that I do not go to them, and beseech them for the Lord's sake to repent, however they take it, or whatever pains or trouble it should cost me. I seldom come out of the pulpit, but my conscience smites me, that I have been no more serious and fervent in such a case. It accuses me not so much for want of human ornaments or elegancy—but it asketh me—'How couldst thou speak of life and death with such a heart?' The God of mercy pardon me, and awaken me with the rest of his servants, that have been thus sinfully negligent. O Lord, save us from insensibility and hardness of heart, otherwise I can be no fit instrument for saving others.'

SECTION V.

DILIGENCE—THE SPIRIT OF SCRIPTURAL PREACHING.

How instructive is the constant eyeing of our Divine Pattern,* with his whole heart, his whole time, engaged in his Father's work. His greatest diligence, however, was concentrated in his public Ministry. "He taught," when at Jerusalem, "*daily* in the temple;" and wherever else a concourse was gathered, he was ready to open his mouth for hortatory, didactic, or parabolical

* Luke xix. 47. xix. 37. xxii. 53.

instruction.* The first labourers of the Gospel, and the Fathers of the early church closely followed their Master's example.†

The Apostle contemplated far greater danger from sloth than from excessive activity, in preaching the word. He exhorts therefore to "instancy in season and *out of season*,"‡—not only improving the ordinary routine of preaching seasons, but catching at opportunities that might appear unseasonable, as our conscience under spiritual influence may dictate. And what is there in the present day that renders the employment less necessary—less binding—less effectual? Is not the mass of unconverted hearers as large with us, as in the primitive church? And how can Christ's sheep among them "hear his voice" without a Preacher?§ No other medium will supersede this appointed channel of Divine communications.‖

The frequency of Sabbath preaching must depend upon physicial strength and other circumstances, over which there can be no control. Where the heart is really engaged in the work, the willingness of the spirit will be in general only restrained by the weakness of the flesh. A double exercise of our duty begins to be called for by the concurrent voices of our Diocesans. In many cases a third exercise has been voluntarily offered to meet the pressing emergency. This service has been profitably and popularly employed in a familiar repetition of one of former exercises. Few

* John vii. 37. Matt. v. xiii.

† Acts v. 42. xix. 9. xxviii. 23. and notices in the Homiletical writings of the Fathers. Comp. Jer. xxvi. 5. Hag. ii. 10, 20.

‡ 2 Tim. iv. 2. § John x. 16, 27. with Rom. x. 14.

‖ The apostle, though keeping up intercourse with the Thessalonians by his pen, still desired to see their face for their better advantages of Christian instruction. 1 Thess. iii. 10.

minds could long support the labour and excitement of bringing forth three successive subjects to our people. Nor indeed would their digestive powers healthfully receive so large a quantity of food; whereas the system of repetition assists instead of loading the digestion.

Much more is implied in this diligence than the formal routine of a Sabbath address. Such an infrequent and mechanical exhibition ill represents the parental obligations subsisting between a pastor and his flock. Would a father be satisfied with this feeble periodical admonition, when his beloved son was in continual and most imminent danger?

Exciting examples of preaching diligence are not wanting in the annals of our hierarchy. Hooper was not one of the 'unpreaching prelates,' who excited honest Latimer's indignation and remonstrance. He would say, 'that no Bishop ought to complain of one sermon a day.'* Probably his own custom exceeded these bounds. Fox informs us, that, 'being Bishop of two dioceses (Gloucester and Worcester) he yet so ruled and guided either of them and both together, as though he had in charge but one family. No father in his household, no gardener in his garden, nor husbandman in his vineyard, was more or better occupied, than he in his diocese among his flock, going about his towns and villages in teaching and preaching to the

* 'Fifteen masses a day did not suffice for the priests of Baal; and yet one sermon a day seems more than a good Bishop or Evangelical Pastor can bear.'—Hooper's Confessions delivered to the King and Parliament, 1550. Daily preaching was Chrysostom's rule for a Bishop (doubtless with application to subordinate Ministers.) De Sacer. Lib. vi. 4. If the letter of the rule be impracticable, let us at least endeavour to approximate to its standard, and let not its spirit be lost.

people there." Bishop Jewel's saying—'A Bishop ought to die preaching'—was strikingly confirmed in his own death, which appears to have been hastened, if not to have been caused by the ardour of his Episcopal zeal.* Of Bishop Matthew (Bishop of Durham in Queen Elizabeth's days, and subsequently translated to York) it was said that "it was easy to trace his journies by the churches he preached at.' The most inveterate haters of prelacy were silenced by the example of this Apostolic Bishop.'† Preaching he used to call 'his beloved work,' from which he did not consider himself to be discharged even by the government of the province of York, so that a challenge was thrown out to Popery—'That Tobias Matthew, the Archbishop of York, though almost eighty years of age, preacheth, more sermons in a year, than you (the Popish party) can prove have been preached by all your Popes from Gregory the Great's days.'‡

The examples of Grimshawe and Wesley, in days nearer our own time, may well serve to stimulate to greater devotedness to our public employ. Twelve or fourteen preaching engagements were included in Mr. Grimshawe's idle week. The number was doubled, in what he called his working week.§ Wesley is calculated to have preached upwards of forty thousand sermons (exclusive of a large number of exhortations) during a course of itinerancy of nearly fifty years,

* The motto at the bottom of a curious portrait of Jewel preserved in Salisbury Palace is—'Væ mihi, si non evangelizavero.' This was also the motto of Usher's own selection for his Archiepiscopal seal—illustrated by his increasing constancy in preaching, subsequent to his elevation.

† No mention of him occurs in Prynne's celebrated work of invective against prelates.

‡ Granger's Biog. Hist. Vol. i. p. 343.

§ Newton's Life of Grimshawe, p. 51.

and an average annual ratio of travelling four thousand five hundred miles. Whatever irregularity or enthusiasm belonged to their unprecedented labours, the large success with which they were honoured, showed the main-spring of their exertion—"the love of Christ constrained them." Let us beware that our censure of their system does not hinder us from transferring an impulse of zeal, self-denial, and self-devotedness, to a more chastised system of Ministration.

But preaching diligence includes not only frequency of employ, but constant repetition of truth. The workman is more anxious to fasten one nail by reiterated blows, than slightly to fix many upon the outward surface. To preach "the same things is not grievous" to the Christian Minister, and for his people, it is often "safe."* The fruitfulness of the earth arises from its "drinking in the rain that cometh oft upon it." Not the weight, but the constant repetition of the heavenly showers makes impressions on the hardest substances. That our "doctrine," therefore, may "drop as the rain,"† it must fall not only in the gentleness of love, but in the frequency of diligence.‡ The constant enforcement of fundamental truths is necessary for their deeper and more practical influence. Truths that have been marked out by gainsayers or seducers, must form prominent topics of our Ministry. Truths also of daily use and practice, entering into the mind and time, will be sound doctrine to hear and preach to the end of our course.§

* Phil. iii. 1. † Deut. xxxii. 2. with Heb. vi. 7.

‡ Isa. xxviii. 10.

§ The apostle exhorts to pulpit diligence by a most foreboding anticipation. 2 Tim. iv. 2, 3.

SECTION VI.

SINGLENESS—THE SPIRIT OF SCRIPTURAL PREACHING.

'THE Ministerial work must be managed purely for God and the salvation of the people, and not for any private ends of our own. This is our sincerity in it. A wrong end makes all the work bad from us, however good in itself. Self-denial is of absolute necessity in every Christian, but of a double necessity in a Minister, as he hath a double sanctification and dedication to God. And without self-denial he cannot do God an hour's faithful service. Hard studies, much knowledge, and excellent preaching is but more glorious hypocritical sinning, if the ends be not right.'* The main end in the employ of the Ministry is the glory of God. It is 'the single eyeing' of this end, that 'makes all things sweet and holy.'† This was the purpose that filled the heart that directed the course of our Great Exemplar.‡ This was also the spirit of the Apostle§—the true spirit of a Christian Minister—the result of serious self-scrutiny and severe spiritual conflict. Experience (for it must plainly be more a matter of experience than of observation,) assures us of the extreme difficulty of preaching with singleness of heart. How much of our study in *the very composition of our sermons*, flows from a selfish principle, and rolls on in the same corrupt channel! *In the pulpit* itself—in our Master's immediate presence—what is it that sometimes gives animation to our delivery, tone to our voice, and emphasis to our words? Are we never "preaching ourselves" in the very form and act

* Baxter's Reformed Pastor.
† Leighton.
‡ John viii. 50. v. 41.
§ 1 Thess. ii. 6.

of preaching "Christ Jesus the Lord?" If in the impulse of the moment, any forcible matter falls from us, how seldom it is unaccompanied with self-complacency, expectation of present effect, or disappointment in its failure! How hard is it to preach without undue regard to the approbation of the Christian or intelligent part of our congregation! What a struggle often to repress the apprehension of being considered *commonplace*, or the desire to be original and powerful! How difficult thus to sink our gifts in the grace of humility, and so to suppress what might recommend us to men of taste and talent, in order to clothe the same sentiment in a less imposing but a more useful garb! How natural the desire rather to know whether the sermon has been approved, than whether it has been profitably applied. And when we feel that we have made but an indifferent figure, it is as if we had missed the prize of the day. We cannot bear that "our God should humble us among" our flock, and that they should think of us as vessels of inferior value—not "of gold and of silver," but of "wood and earth."*

Baxter's serious remarks are equally applicable to our own day, as to his—'Consider, I beseech you, brethren, what baits there are in the work of the Ministry to entice a man to be selfish, that is, to be carnal and impious, even in the highest works of piety. The

* See Solomon's wise aphorism, Prov. xxv. 27. It is said of one of the ancient Fathers, that he would weep at the applause that was frequently given to his sermons. 'Would to God,' said he, 'they had rather gone away silent and thoughtful!' 'Docente te in Ecclesia, non clamor populi, sed gemitus suscitatur. Lachryma auditorum laudes tuæ sunt.'—Hieron. ad Nepot. 'Libenter vocem audio, non qui sibi plausum, sed qui mihi planctum movet.' Bern. Serm. 59. Cantic. 'I love a serious preacher, who speaks for my sake, and not for his own, who seeks my salvation, and not his own vain-glory.' Fenelon's Letter to the French Academy, p. 230.

fame of a godly man is as great a snare as the fame of a learned man. And wo to him that takes up with *the fame of godliness* instead of godliness. "Verily I say unto you, they have their reward." When the times were all for learning and empty formalities, then the temptation of the proud did lie that way. But now, through the unspeakable mercy of God, the most lively practical preaching is in credit, and godliness itself is in credit: and now the temptation to proud men is here, even to pretend to be zealous preachers and godly men. O what a fine thing doth it seem, to have the people crowd to hear us, and to be affected with what we say, and that we can command their judgments and affections. To have the people call you the chariots and horsemen of Israel—to have them depend upon you, and ruled by you, though this may be more than their duty, yet a little grace may serve to make you seem zealous men for them. *Nay*, pride may do it without any special grace.'*

This sin of vain-glory cleaves to the most eminent Ministers. The following exercise from the diary of a late excellent Minister striks a chord of sympathy with many of us—'I have to observe in my mind a sinful anxiety to preach well, rather than a holy anxiety to preach usefully. I fear I rather seek my own honour than God's. I confess this sin, I trust I repent of it from my heart: I hope for its forgiveness, and its removal from my breast.' Again—'The evening spoiled with

* Reformed Pastor. 'That which many times causes uneasiness in Pastors, is a principle of self-love, which prompts us to seek a private unwarranted delight in that change of men's minds, which we have effected. The spirit of man pleases itself with the success of its own travail; and when we seem to propose no other aim but God's glory, the deceitfulness of self-love is less capable of discovery.' Bishop Godeau's Past. Instructions, pp. 44, 45.

wretched pride and self-complacency—a mischievous weed, deep-rooted, which all my winter seasons have not yet killed. O may it at length be rooted out.'* It was therefore most judicious advice of Bishop Taylor to his Clergy—'Let no man preach for the praise of men. But if you meet it, instantly watch and stand upon your guard, and pray against your own vanity; and by an express act of acknowledgement and adoration return the praise to God. Remember, that Herod was, for the omission of this, smitten by an angel; and do thou tremble, fearing lest the judgment of God be otherwise than the sentence of the people.'†

Great care is needed, lest we draw a veil over the glories of our adorable Master, by selfish ends. This is indeed to lose sight of the great end of the Ministry, which is not to gain applause to ourselves, but to bring glory to God, and good to our people. 'Our business is to make men think, not of our eloquence, but of their own souls; to attend not to our fine language, but to their own everlasting interest.'‡ Our duty is, 'not to

* Biographical Portraiture of Rev. J. Hinton, p. 116.

† Clergyman's Instructor, p. 108. 'Let all eloquent preachers beware, lest they filt any man's ears with sounding words, when they should be feeding his soul with the bread of everlasting life. Let them fear, lest instead of honouring God, they honour themselves. *If any man ascend the pulpit-with the intention of uttering a fine thing, he is committing a deadly sin.*' H. K. White.

‡ Smith on the Sacred Office, Lect. xviii. It was a bitter regret to Augustine, that his early Ministry had been distinguished by this character—'ut placeret, non ut doceret.' Jerome complained of many in his time—'Id habent curæ, non quomodo scripturarum medullas ebibant, sed quomodo aures populi declamatorum flosculis mulceant.' 'Do not say within yourself—How much or how elegantly I can talk upon such a text: but what can I say more usefully to those who hear me, for the instruction of their minds, for the conviction of their consciences, and for the persuasion of their hearts. Let not your chief design be to work out a sheet, or to hold out an hour, but to save a soul.'—Watts's Humble Attempt, pp. 19, 20.

please but to feed'—as one of the old writers expressed it—'not to stroke the ear, but to strike the heart.'* Mr. Richmond well said,—'I have no wish to be a popular preacher in any sense but one, viz. *a preacher to the hearts of the people.*'† Indeed the Gospel was never meant as an occasion of display, but as a treasure to dispense for the benefit of the world. And as far as we are embued with the spirit of our office, we shall esteem the enriching of one soul with the unsearchable riches of Christ, a more durable recompense than an investiture with the dignity and honour of an earthly crown.

There is no warranted expectation of success without this singleness of spirit. The matter indeed is from God, but the manner and the dress, the principle, the exhibition, is but 'incense thrown upon the altar of vanity.'‡ We may preach clearly in statement and forcibly in manner, but defect in "doing all" with a single eye "to the glory of God," will ever prove a canker and a mildew upon our Ministry. However diligently we may be employed in his service, yet nothing is really done, to any purpose, or with any acceptance, that is not done for God. So that a painstaking Minister, who has been engaged in the service of God for selfish ends, may at last sink into the grave with Grotius's affecting lamentation—'Alas! I have lost my life in doing nothing, with great labour.' Or should he be used as an instrument in the work of God, he will be in the unenviable character of the servant, who never tastes the provisions which he dispenses to the guests at his Master's table.§ Godly simplicity is

* 'Pungere non palpare,' was Jerom's direction for the Preacher's words.

† Richmond's Life, p. 50. ‡ Hall's Sermon, p. 45.

§ It is a solemn remark of Massillon, that 'God sometimes, in saving his elect, makes use of instruments which he afterwards

the alchemy that converts every thing it touches into gold. A deficiency in talent or judgment may be compensated for, where the paramount desire is, that Christ "in all things may have the pre-eminence;" and where it is the corresponding expression of the heart—"He must increase, but I must decrease."* This indeed is the true character of the "friends of the bridegroom;"† to woo for him, not for ourselves—to seek his honour, not our own—and to adopt a tone of preaching, not as gaining more regard to ourselves, but as bringing sinners into union with their heavenly Saviour.‡

'He that intends truly to preach the Gospel and not himself; he that is more concerned to do good to others, than to raise his own fame, or to procure a following to himself, and that makes this the measure of all his meditations and sermons, that he may put things in the best light, and recommend them with the most advantage to his people—this man so made, and so moulded, cannot miscarry in his work. He will certainly succeed to some degree. The word spoken by him shall not return again. He shall have his crown, and his reward from his labours. And to say all that can be said, in one word, with St. Paul, he "shall both save himself and them that hear him."§

casts away.' A thought that may well call to mind 1 Cor. ix. 27, with deep and serious personal application.

* John iii. 29. † Ibid. 30.

‡ Mr. Cotton preached an university sermon at Cambridge, much approved by those 'who relished the wisdom of words more than the words of wisdom,' which, however, upon a clearer understanding of the true principles of the Ministry, he committed to the flames. Subsequently preaching in the same pulpit in a more Scriptural tone, his sermon was attended with the Divine blessing to one of the most eminent divines of that day—Dr. Preston. Mather's New England, Book iii. pp. 15, 16.

§ Burnet's Pastoral Care, ch. ix.

SECTION VII.

LOVE—THE SPIRIT OF SCRIPTURAL PREACHING.

LOVE is the grand distinctive mark of the Christian Ministry, as a 'Ministry of reconciliation.' The great labour of the Minister should be to cast himself in the mould of his commission. Paley has admirably illustrated the exquisite address of Christian love, which characterizes the Epistle to the Romans, mixing itself with the most offensive statements of truth, and conciliating a kind attention, as the most effectual avenue to conviction.*

"Speaking the truth in love,"† is perhaps the most complete description in few words of our office. Some from a false charity would keep back offensive parts of truth. Some again speak it in fear, from the apprehension of inconvenient consequences to themselves. Some also speak, in faithfulness, as if their responsibility was simply to deliver their own souls, and not rather to win souls to Christ.

Love should pervade the whole tone of our Ministry. The cause of truth may be weakened by an inaccurate exhibition of its spirit. The Scripture marks the temper as well as the subject matter of our Ministry. An Apostle assures us in his own case, that if he "were to speak with tongues of men and of angels," yet without love, he would be no better than "sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal."‡ How delightful is it, when we can look down from the pulpit, and regard the Christian

* Horæ Paulinæ. † Eph. iv. 15. ‡ 1 Cor. xiii. 1.

part of our congregation in the tender light of "mother, and sister, and brother." Even as respects the unconverted, the most fruitful seasons of our Ministry, are those, when we can most naturally weep over those who have no heart to weep for themselves. What force does that affecting declaration carry with it—"Of whom I tell you even weeping!"* The testimony that is borne on this particular respecting Mr. Brown of Haddington, is far more enviable than that of eloquence or originality. Though not deficient in the exercise of Christian sympathy, and able to endure bodily or domestic afflictions without a tear, (an exercise of self-controul however not desirable, and mentioned only for the sake of the contrast which it affords,) yet, when warning sinners of their danger, and "beseeching them to be reconciled unto God," he is said to have been often unable to restrain his emotions.†

* Phil. iii. 18. 'Oh! how deep into the heart go those periods that are sown in the unforced, uninvited tears of the preacher!'—Robinson on Claude. Calvin writes excellently on this point—'Sunt multi clamosi reprehensores, qui in vitia declamitando, vel potius fulminando, mirum zeli ardorem præ se ferunt; interea securo sunt animo, ut videantur per lusum guttur et latera exercere velle. At pii pastoris est, flere secum, priusquam alios ad fletum provocet; tacita cogitatione discruciari, priusquam indignationis signa edat; et plus retinere apud se doloris, quam aliis faciat.' In 2 Cor. ii. 4.

† Brown's Life, p. 22. Mr. Winter tells us of his friend Mr. Whitfield—'I hardly knew him to go through a sermon without weeping more or less, and I truly believe his were the tears of sincerity. I have heard him say in the pulpit—'You blame me for weeping, but how can I help it, when you will not weep for yourselves, though your immortal souls are upon the verge of destruction, and for aught you know you are hearing your last sermon, and may never have another opportunity to have Christ offered to you.''—Jay's Life of Winter, pp. 27, 28. The outward expression, of love may greatly vary from constitutional causes, nor would we insist upon tears as a necessary evidence of a tender heart. But the spirit in the cases referred to was warranted by the strongest evidence to be genuine and fervent love to souls, and is well worthy of our imitation.

It would add considerably to effect, if this spirit is *suffered to express itself in corresponding tenderness of application.* The Apostles were used to address their people with language expressive of the most tender endearment.* The extant Epistles of the Primitive Fathers, the popular discourses of Cyprian and Augustine, and the Homillies of Chrysostom, are strongly imbued with the same character. The amiable Fenelon observes—'I would have every Minister of the Gospel address his audience with the zeal of a friend, with the generous energy of a father, *and with the exuberant affection of a mother.*' It is obvious indeed that this language of tenderness requires the controul of chaste sobriety, but the well-regulated exercise of the genuine feelings of our heart would strike many a chord of sympathy, interest, and reciprocal feeling, and would bring us into conciliating contact with the subjects of our instruction. Apart also from an affectionate appellation, much winning effect may be produced by a general spirit of interest in them, bringing before them, from time to time, our remembrance of them in our prayers and thanksgivings,† our ardent longing for their Christian advancement,‡ and the strong connexion of their prosperity with our own happiness.§ Such a spirit will contribute much to cement the bond between us, and to maintain a beneficial influence over their hearts.

This *spirit of love must deeply imbue* the language of reproof. We are commanded to "exhort," but it is "with all long suffering;"‖ bearing with the froward-

* Comp. Phil. iv. 1. The apostolic greetings of St. Paul's Epistles, with the Epistles of his brethren throughout.
† 3 Comp. Rom. i. 9. 1 Cor. i. 4. Eph. i. 16. Phil. i. 3, 4, &c.
‡ Phil. i. 8. § 1 Thess. iii. 8. 2 John 4. 3 John 4.
‖ 2 Tim. iv. 2.

ness that will often resist the most affectionate language of exhortation. Meekness, gentleness, and patience are to be the characteristics of teaching the opponents of the Gospel.* The wounds must be made upon their consciences, not upon their names. All unnecessary excitement of enmity must be carefully avoided, and the faithfulness that lays open their sins, must, as far as in us lies, be shown to be "the wounds of a friend."†

But especially must this spirit be cultivated in *delivering the solemn denunciations of the Gospel*, lest we mingle strange fire with the holy flame from the altar of God. Some Ministers seem to combine human passion with their zeal, and to speak of the wrath of God, as if they were giving vent to their own indignation; like the madman, who casteth firebrands, arrows, and death, and saith—"Am I not in sport?"‡ How different this spirit from the persuasive rule of the Apostolic Ministry,§ and from the tenderness of our Divine Master, who breaks off from his most awful strain of denunciation, as if unable any longer to suppress the yearnings of his compassion.‖

The idea of a judge compelled to pronounce the sentence of condemnation upon his own beloved son, might illustrate something of the conflict of solemnity and affection, with which the Minister of Christ ought ever to speak of "that place, where the worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched." To forbear to speak of it from a scrupulous sensitiveness of feeling, is an

* Ibid. ii. 24, 25. Circumliniatur modo poculum cœlestis sapientiæ melle, ut possint ab imprudentibus amara remedia sine offensione potari; dum illiciens prima dulcedo acerbitatem soporis asperi sub prætextu suavitatis occultat. Lactant.

† Prov. xxvii. 6. ‡ Prov. xxvi. 18, 19.

§ 2 Cor. v. 11. Comp. Deut. xxxii. 2. ‖ Matt. xxiii. 23—37.

act of postive unfaithfulness to God, to our own conscience, and to our people.* To make it the prominent characteristic of our Ministry, is to disguise the Gospel of love "with a covering not of God's Spirit." To speak of it in any other tone than that of *tender seriousness*, is to expose ourselves to the rebuke of the disciples, when they would have called down fire from heaven—"Ye know not what manner of spirit ye are of."† Trembling, faltering lips alone, become us, as guilty sinners speaking to our fellow-men not more guilty than ourselves. It is the frame of mind alone, that will give power to our message in the hearts of persons "dead in trespasses and sins." A hard, bold, unfeeling manner (not to speak of its revolting inhumanity) is, as we have just hinted, most uncongenial with our Master's Spirit. It may be thought a great attainment, thus to set the feelings of human nature in our congregation at defiance. But such faithfulness and courage brings no honour upon the Gospel, and produces little or no effect upon our people. "The wrath of man worketh not the righteousness of God."‡ On the other hand, a tender spirit, instead of excluding these solemn parts of our message, enables us to introduce them most effectively. For while a severe mode or tone of address is often attributed to ill-temper or resentment, even those, who are indisposed to follow our instructions, will listen to them with patience, and often with complacency.

We are not arguing for that sensitive delicacy, which, when the patient shrinks, touches no more. But we must conceive, that a tender and affectionate mode of

* Is not the latter clause in Mark xvi. 16. as component a part of the Ministerial commission as the former?

† Luke ix. 55, ‡ James i. 20.

treatment is obviously best adapted to the exigency of the case. The brute creation may be driven. But rational creatures require to be drawn. The only force that is likely to act with power is the compulsion of love. Indeed the heathen sophists insisted upon kindness in an orator as indispensable to his success,* a truth which is most clearly illustrated in the oratory of the Ministry. None will open their hearts to the preacher, except the tone of his instructions has impressed them with a sincere conviction of his love to their best interests.† Love is the life, power, soul, and spirit of pulpit eloquence, the only means of convincing and edifying by instruction, and the sure means to please, delight, conquer, and triumph over the hearts and affections of our people. We wonder not at the success of the Ministry of St. Paul, when we read, that at Ephesus (which doubtless was an instance of the general course of his Ministry) he "ceased not for three years to warn every *one of them night and day with tears.*"‡ Some eminent Ministers from a want of this spirit of the Gospel, are undistinguished by those marks of effectiveness, which are found in the Ministrations of many of their brethren, of far inferior gifts, but of a

* The moral of the fabled tradition of Amphion by his music drawing stones after him for the walls of Thebes, and of Orpheus taming wild beasts by his harp, alluded probably to the extraordinary power they were enabled to exercise over insensible and unyielding hearts. Ευνοια. Arist. Rhet. lib. ii. Homer introduces his hoary Nestor pleading in this insinuating spirit—ευφρονεων. Iliad lib. ii. 78.

† 'Qui docendo nititur persuadere quod bonum est, nihil horum trium spernat, ut scilicet doceat, delectat, flectat; ita enim audietur intelligenter, libenter, obedienter'—Augustine. 'These three steps in this progress are intimately connected. We should speak so, as in the first place, to instruct and be understood; in the second, to please, so far at least as to attract and fix attention; in the third, to gain and conquer. Campbell on Past. Char. p. 87.

‡ Acts xx. 31.

more affectionate temperament.* Menalaus was pronounced 'unworthy of the priesthood, because he had the fury of a cruel tyrant, and the rage of a savage beast;'† which sufficiently stamps, by the force of contrast, the spirit of the priesthood to be that of gentleness and love, the defect of which will ever prove a most serious impediment to the acceptance and consequent efficiency of our Ministrations. Fletcher remarked despondingly with regard to himself, but most truly with regard to the Ministry, that 'love, continual, universal, ardent love, was the *soul of all the labour of a Minister.*'‡ The influence of love gives a tender expression to Ministerial earnestness, well calculated to operate with winning constraint upon repulsive minds, and 'to bring our people to God, and to keep them continually near to him'—the grand purpose of the Ministry, 'which to me at least,' said Dr. Doddridge—'is a very hard thing.'§

* 'I have always been afraid,' said a late excellent young Minister, 'of driving my people away from the Saviour. I would rather err on the side of drawing them.' Memoirs of Rev. John Escreet, by Rev. T. Webster, p. 50.

† 2 Maccab. iv. 25. ‡ Coxe's Life of Fletcher, p. 21.

§ Orton's Life of Doddridge, ch. v.

PART V.

THE PASTORAL WORK OF THE CHRISTIAN MINISTRY.

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THE PASTORAL WORK OF THE CHRISTIAN MINISTRY.

LET us not think that all our work is done in the study and in the pulpit. Preaching is indeed the grand momentum of Divine agency, but it derives much of its power from the connexion with the pastoral work; and its too frequent disjunction from it, must be considered as a main cause of Ministerial inefficiency.* The Pastor and Preacher combine to form the completeness of the sacred office, as expounded in our ordination service, and implied in scriptural illustrations. The terms, Shepherd, Watchmen, Overseers, Stewards, import not a more general superintendence over the flock, charge, or household, but an acquaintance with their individual wants, and a suitable distribution to the occasion.

We shall enter into some details of this most interesting subject.

* Thus Dr. Doddridge remarked—'My heart does not upbraid me with having kept back any thing that may be profitable to my people. But *I fear I have not followed them sufficiently with domestic and personal exhortations.*'—Orton's Life, ch. ii.

CHAPTER I.

ND IMPORTANCE OF THE PASTORAL WORK.

THE *nature* of the Pastoral work is the personal application of the pulpit Ministry to the proper individualities of our people—looking upon them severally as having a distinct and separate claim upon our attention, cares, and anxiety; urging each of them, as far as possible, to the concerns of eternity; and commending to their hearts a suitable exhibition and offer of salvation. For this purpose we must acquaint ourselves with their situation, habits, character, state of heart, peculiar wants, and difficulties, that we may "give to each of them a portion in due season." The Pastor unites in himself the offices of Watchman and Evangelist. He "*watches for souls*," "lest a root of bitterness should spring up" to the trouble and defilement of the church—lest unchristian tempers and practices should mar the Christian profession—lest a lukewarm spirit should paralyze Christian exertion, or a spirit of contention hinder Christian love. All need his superintendence. The indolent are slumbering—the self-dependent are falling back—the zealous are under the influence of spiritual pride—the earnest are becoming self-righteous—the regular, formal. Then there is the inquirer asking for direction—the tempted and perplexed looking for support—the afflicted longing for the cheering consolation of the Gospel—the convinced sinner, from the slight healing of his wound,*

* Jer. vi. 14.

settling in a delusive peace—the professor "having a name that he lives, but he is dead." These are cases that cannot in all their minute and diversified forms be fully treated in the pulpit. It is therefore in his Pastoral character that the Christian Minister "watches for souls, as one that must give account."* But he "watches also *in all things.*" There *are seasons* peculiarly suited for specific instruction, or for the enforcement of particular duties. There are special opportunities for conviction, reproof, or consolation. There are visitations of Providence in families, or in individuals, when the mind is under an awakening or softening impression—seasons that should find the Minister "doing the work of an Evangelist,"† in vigilant, instant, and suitable improvement; and which, without the habit of constant insight into the ever-varying state and circumstances of our people, would be neglected and lost.

Not pretending to lay down a complete scheme of Pastoral work, we shall attempt the illustration of its general principles by slight sketches of detail. In order that plans may be useful, they must be suitable to their intended sphere. They may be really, but not relatively, good. They must be formed by the character, circumstances, and habits of the people; whether they be scattered or congregrated, educated or illiterate, or a mixture of both—what is their state of ignorance or knowledge—whether the ground has been previously cultivated or neglected—whether it has been occupied by sectaries or left wholly waste—whether the disposition of the people is prepared for the Gospel, or opposed to it. These and many other

* Heb. xiii. 17. † 2 Tim. iv. 5.

considerations, though they would not alter the system of our Ministry, yet would materially influence the moulding of the several parts to a more close and definite adaptation.

The *importance* of this system is *evident from the nature* of the case. The husbandman does not rest with having committed his seed to the earth. He watches its growth with daily and most anxious inspection, and devotes himself with incessant labour, to its preservation from impending dangers, until he has safely gathered the fruit of his toil. And is not the word the imperishable seed? Are not our people the field of God? Are not we the husbandmen, to sow the seed, and instrumentally to gather the harvest? And are our fields more secure from injury, or in less need of constant and anxious superintendence?* Every other illustration of our work illustrates the same point. As physicians, how can we prepare the proper medicines, without a knowledge of the individual disease? As stewards, how can we make our distribution, if unacquainted with the respective cases of our attention? As nursing-mothers, how ineffective our care and tenderdess, if it be not regulated according to the known strength or weakness of our people!

We cannot but advert to the necessity of a systematic adherence to this Ministry. If it be left to the humour or convenience of the moment, procrastination, indolence, and worldly interruptions, will incessantly hinder its operation. Fixed days and hours should be devoted to it with the same determined perseverance as to pulpit preparation. It is obvious, that pastoral visits should embrace as large a scope of soldid instruction as the

* Zepperi Ars Concion. Lib. iv.

limits of time and opportunity may allow; and that we should enter into the spirit of the system with lively and tender interest. An affectionate attention to the young forms a prominent part of this superintendence, both from their connexion with the present encouragement and future prospects of the Ministry, and from the successful avenues which are thus opened to the hearts of parents. To win, therefore, their confidence, by frequent communication and by habits of kindness, will open, with little additional labour, a promise of an abundant harvest. It may sometimes be necessary, in this Ministry, to avail ourselves of the most correct sources of information relative to our people,* though with the greatest discretion to avoid the evils of jealousy and suspicion, and to apply to the best use the materials thus furnished to our hand.

We may further remark that this system is also most strongly inculcated from the highest authority.—"*Searching and seeking out the sheep*," is marked by the Great Shepherd, as the difference between himself and hirelings, against whom the neglect of this pastoral care formed a main article of indictment.† Indeed his own Ministry was of this character. With his disciples, it was that of the Good Shepherd, who "calleth his own sheep by name, and leadeth them out."‡ With the world, it was the constant wakefulness to improve every opportunity, as well of private as of public and general instruction.§ The Ministry of his Apostles was framed after the same pattern.‖ During the three years that the great Apostle was the resident Pastor of a church, he combined parochial with public

* See 1 Cor. i. ii. Phil. ii. 19. 1 Thess. iii. 1—5. 3 John 3.
† Ezek. xxxiv. 6, 8. with 4, 11.
‡ John x. 3.
§ Comp. Luke xiv.
‖ Acts v. 42.

instruction.* "He ceased not to warn every one of them night and day with tears," and the testimony of his conscience on this particular, seems to have been his rejoicing under the overwhelming pressure of Ministerial responsibility.† Indeed his intimate acquaintance with the spiritual state of a vast number of individuals in the churches, is evident from the relative appropriateness of his instructions, given in the exact line of exhortation, reproof, or encouragement, to which he knew the personal distinctness of their experience would instantly respond. His readiness in "changing his voice"‡ to his people, could only have been the result of an accurate and diligent inspection of their state.

The documents of the early ages furnish abundant testimony to the Pastoral work, as a constituent part of the primitive Ministry. Ignatius is said to have known almost every individual in his flock.§ Cyprian frequently gives us his judgment and practice on this subject.‖ Gregory wrote a serious treatise on this

* Publicly and from house to house, Acts xx. 20.—'as if he perceived that his public doctrine would vanish into air, except it were assisted by private admonition and conference.'—Bowles, lib. ii. c. 6. See Calvin, Grotius, Hammond, in loco, Beza on Acts v. 42. and Secker's Charges, p. 246. Comp. also the Apostle's Ministry at Colosse and Thessalonica, Col. i. 28, 29. 1 Thess. ii. 11, 12. 'If false teachers "creep into houses," for the purposes of seduction from the truth, (2 Tim. iii. 6.) should not the orthodox pastors show at least equal diligence?'—Bowles, ib.

† Col. i. 3, 6. with 26, 27. ‡ Gal. iv. 20.

§ He gives a useful parochial hint—not to forget servants in our ministrations. Epist. ad Polycarp. No class of our people are generally more out of our sphere of instruction. Plans, however, have been devised of assembling them on the Sabbath, with the consent of their employers, and with encouraging success. Where time and physical strength allow, the word of God, read with them in an expository and catechetical mode, would form a most important system of scriptural instruction.

‖ Quid est enim major aut melior curâ præpositorum, quam diligenti solicitudine et medelâ salubri fovendis et conservendis

department of the Ministry. Later down in the Church, Ostervald expresses his surprise, that a Christian Minister can satisfy his conscience, without a diligent parochial Ministration.* The questions and exhortations in our own Ordination services are evidently formed upon this model.† The episcopal instructions of Taylor, Hort, Burnet, Secker, and Leighton,‡ not to mention other names of more recent date, have solemnly charged it upon our consciences. The obligation of our Ordination vow—to "take heed *to all the* flock, over which the Holy Ghost hath made us overseers,"§ —evidently implies, as Baxter observes, that 'each individual member of our charge must be taken heed of, and watched over by us in our Ministry. To which end it is supposed necessary, that (unless where *absolute necessity forbiddeth it*, through the scarcity of Pastors, and greatness of the flock) we should know every person that belongeth to our charge.' 'I confess—

ovibus providere; cum Dominus loquatur et dicat—Ezek. xxxiv. 4. Cum ergo pastoribus talibus, per quos Dominicæ oves negliguntur et pereunt—si Dominus comminatur—quid nos aliud facere oportet, frater carissime, quam colligendi et revocandi Christi ovibus exhibere diligentiam plenam.' Cyp. Epist. lxviii.

* See his Lectures on the Sacred Office, pp. 242—245.

† See Comber on the Ordination of Priests, and Secker's Charges, pp. 192, 193. Burnet remarks on the question respecting the use of private as well as public admonition—to the whole, as well as to the sick—'This is as plainly personal and constant, as words can make any thing; and in this is expressed the so much neglected, but so necessary duty, which incumbents owe their flock—in a private way, visiting instructing and admonishing them, which is one of the most useful and important parts of their duty.'—Past Care, chap. vi.

‡ Clergyman's Instructor, pp. 109, 110, 365. Burnet's Past. Care, ch. viii. Secker's Charges, pp. 25, 229, 245. Leighton's Works, ii. 445, 447. Often would Leighton commiserate the London clergy whom the extent of their cures disabled from individual attention to their flock. 'Were I again,' said he in his last retirement, 'to be a parish Minister, I must follow sinners to their homes, and even to their alehouse.'

§ Acts xx. 28.

says Bishop Burnet—'that this way of parochial visitation is an increase of labour; but that will seem no hard matter to such as have a right sense of their Ordination vows, of the value of souls, and of the dignity of their function. If men had the spirit of their calling in them, and a due measure of flame and heat in carrying it on, labour in it would be rather a pleasure than a trouble.'

Calvin often lays down the Scriptural obligation to this work, and reports the faithful harvests reaped at Geneva, when the Ministers and elders went from house to house, and dealt closely and individually with the consciences of the people. When Baxter first came to Kidderminster, scarcely a family was known to worship God in their house: when he left it, but few families were living without this daily acknowledgement of God, or were unwilling to submit to his private catechisings and personal conference. Six hundred communicants attended the Lord's table.* Alleine—as one of his biographers informs us—'often did bless God for the great success he had in these exercises, saying that God had made him as instrumental of good to souls this way, as by his public preaching, if not more.' Cotton Mather, while 'he looked upon this work as laborious as any in all his Ministry,' yet 'set a great value upon his Pastoral visits. He not only did, but got good in his conversations with all sorts of persons, and thought he never walked more in the Spirit, than thus walking to his flock, to serve and seek their best interest."†

* See Calamy's Account—'I never knew Ministers,' said he, speaking of Alleine's parochial diligence, 'who *prudently and diligently* took that course, to be unprosperous in their work: but by them, that have wisely and faithfully used it, I kave known that done, that before seemed incredible.'

† See his Life, p. 37, and his Essays to do Good. See also the

The *uses of this Pastoral system to ourselves* are of highest moment. In the improvement of this intercourse with our people, it might almost be said, that we receive as much as we impart. Teachers must be constant learners; and much is learned consciously or unconsciously by this system. It is indeed at once the seal to the testimony of the preceding Sabbath, and the treasure-house, from which the most valuable materials are furnished for our ensuing Ministrations.* We have before noticed cases of observation, during the week, as often suggesting both the subjects and the matter for the pulpit.† And perhaps there is no better way of filling up subjects of interesting self-application, than an attempt to draw them out familiarly in the

Life of Pliny Fisk, pp. 31, 32. Dr. Doddridge's exercises on this subject, on his return from an ordination, are most deeply interesting—'I have many cares and labours: may God forgive me, that I am so apt to forget those of the pastoral office. I now resolve, 1. To take a more particular account of the souls committed to my care. 2. To visit, as soon as possible, the whole congregation, to learn more particularly the circumstances of them, their children, and servants. 3 Will make as exact a list as I can of those that I have reason to believe are unconverted, awakened, converted, fit for communion, or already in it. 4. When I hear any thing particular, relating to the religious state of my people, I will visit them, and talk with them. 5. I will especially be careful to visit the sick. I will begin immediately with inspection over those under my own roof, that I may with the greater freedom urge other families to the like care. O my soul, thy account is great: it is high time that it be got into better order. Lord, I hope thou knowest, I am desirous of approving myself a faithful servant of thee and of souls. O watch over me, that I may watch over them; and then all will be well.' Orton's Life, ch. v.

* 'Acquaint yourselves'—was the excellent advice of Matthew Henry—'with the state of your people's souls—their temptations—their infirmities. You will then know the better how to preach to them.' Life, p. 124 'Rely on it, he who hopes to discharge the duties of the pulpit ably, appropriately, seasonably, and to the greatest advantage of his flock, without being much with them, entertains a hope, which is perfectly unreasonable, and will certainly be disappointed.' Professor Miller's Letters.

† See p. 259.

course of parochial visitation with those individual cases, to which, in common with our own, they might be adapted. The sermons thus made in our parishes are of a very different character from those that are thought out or collected in the study. They are less abstract, but more pointed and experimental. We are enabled to mark the precise evil requiring caution, the deficiency calling for exhortation, the circumstances needing advice, the distress or perplexity looking for consolation and encouragement: and thus the domestic preaching of the week becomes a most useful auxiliary to our pulpit Ministry, the style of which from its distinct reference to specific cases, acquires a sort of locality, that makes it far more interesting in its character, and more close in its application upon this model.

Medical skill is gained much more by practical experience, than by any system of abstract study even of standard works; and thus, whatever value belongs to an accurate and well-directed course of reading (and the Writer is very far from depreciating its value), yet he is persuaded, that the study of the human heart—of our own heart most especially—is far more important.*

* An old divine used to say, that a preacher had three books to study—the Bible, himself, and the people. Gillies' Hist. Coll. Bishop Burnet remarks it as 'the capital error in men's preparing themselves for the sacred Ministry, that they study books more than themselves.'—History of his own Times. 'While a Minister is engaged in composing and preaching, he is giving out to others; but whilst he is occupied in familiar conferences, he is taking in for himself. One half hour's practical study of the human heart in personal visits, gives an impulse to ten hours' speculative meditation from men and authors.' D. Wilson's Essay to Baxter's Reformed Pastor, p. xliii. 'I was fond enough of books,' said Halyburton, on his death-bed, 'but what the Lord let me see of *my evil heart*, and what was necessary against it, was more useful to me in the course of my Ministry than all my books. This is the best pulpit I was ever in. I presume, in the case I am now

Without that experience, which can only be obtained in pastoral practice, our statements, though solid and valuable in themselves, and connected in their system, will be deficient in effect, for want of being distinctly applicable; like a medical practitioner dealing out warranted medicines promiscuously to his patients, with little apprehension of injury, but with as little prospect of material benefit.

Nor is this *system less important to our people.* Every parochial Minister is conversant with the fact how very little our pulpit discourses are comprehended, retained, or applied by the poor. There is a sort of mental deafness among the mass, so that, except the word is brought to them in the smallest parcels and with the most direct application, the sound only is heard, while the meaning is never fixed upon the mind with an intelligent or permanent apprehension.

The preservation of our people from schism, and the maintenance of Christian unity among them, is one of the many blessings resulting from this system. The converts of preaching if left to themselves, and destitute of this fostering superintendence, become like "children tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine." If the fold be tended only on the Sabbath, and left unprotected during the week, we must not wonder at the progress of sectarianism—

in, (on his death-bed,) to suggest this advice: that it may not only be your care to be diligent in composing sermons, but above all, examine your own hearts, and make use of what discoveries you get there, to enable you to dive into consciences, to awaken hypocrites, to separate the precious from the vile, and to do it with that accuracy and caution, as not to make sad the hearts of those whom God has made glad. This is the great point in religion, and in the management of your Ministry, that you may obtain the testimony of the great Shepherd, when he shall appear.' Halyburton's Memoirs.

if "grievous wolves enter in among them, not sparing the flock"—or if even "among the flock should arise men, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them."* The tendency of Evangelical preaching as distinguished from moral ethics, or cold orthodoxy) is to excite a spirit of inquiry and interest, which, important as it is, if it be not carefully directed and controuled, lays our flock more open than before, to "the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive."† Vast indeed is the responsibility of what Hooker calls—'the greatest blot or blemish of notable ignorance—unconscionable absence from the cures, whereof men have taken the charge."‡ Yet we are persuaded, that the mere residence, and even the faithful preaching, of the servant of Christ, without his watchful fatherly care, will be comparatively of little avail. The prevention or cure of the evil will be found under the blessing of God, in the exertions of a Pastor, steadily devoting himself to his people, cementing the bond of union and confidence between them by his "mutual faith;"§ they looking unto him as their affectionate Minister, and he living for them as his beloved charge.'

* This danger is expressly marked as an incentive to pastoral care, Acts xx. 29, 30. with 28.

Nunquam, custodibus illis,
Nocturnam stabulis furem, incursusque luporum,
Aut impacatos a tergo horrebis Iberos.—Virg. Georg. iii. 406.

† Eph. iv. 14

‡ Book v. 81. Quesnel, in his sketches of the Minister's Character, marks the following—'To love residence—to absent himself but little, and that out of necessity—never to be absent in heart—to return to his flock as soon as possible—to try all means of surmounting the obstacles which keep him from it—and to look upon non-residence as the most grateful thing imaginable to Satan, and which he promotes with all his power, as a source of the perdition of souls.' On 1 Thess. ii. 17, 18.

§ Rom. i. 12.

This leads to another advantage of this system—*the gaining the confidence and affection of our people.* It must be a hindrance to our Ministry, if we either do not know our people, or are as cold as if we did not know them. To win their hearts is often the most successful way to win their souls. They must know us in order to love us—and for this purpose the Pastor must live among them as their friend, gradually to slide into their hearts, and draw out their whole souls. It was thus the Missionary Eliot, gained an ascendancy over his flock. 'He was indeed' as his Biographer tells us, 'the father of his people.. By holding frequent intercourse with them, he greatly endeared himself to them, and became acquainted with the extent of their knowledge of Divine things, with their trials and difficulties, with their joys and sorrows. He was in this manner enabled to act as their instructor, counsellor, and comforter.'* A congregation thus used to see their Minister in private, is like a family listening to a

* See his Life. 'I am too backward,' said the celebrated John Rogers of Dedham, 'to *private visiting* of neighbours at their houses, which *neglect is very injurious;* for from this cause *their love to me cannot be so great as it would be,* nor am I so well acquainted with their particular states, and therefore cannot speak so fitly to them as I might.' Archbishop Secker remarks—'A chief reason why we have so little hold upon our people is, that we converse with them so little as watchmen over their souls.' After alluding to the influence which the foreign Protestant pastors, the Romish priests, and the Dissenters gain over their people by this means, he adds,—'Why should not we learn from them?'—Charges, pp. 246, 247. Mr. Hall observes—'The more frequently the pastor converses with his people, provided his conversation be properly conducted, the more will his person be endeared, and his Ministry acceptable'—Sermon on Discour. and Supp. p. 29. For this purpose Sir James Stonehouse, (see his Letters to a young Minister,) Ostervald, Dr. Stearne, (Clerg. Inst. p. 384.) and Dr. Watts, recommend a Ministerial register, to note, as may be practicable, their individualities of character and circumstances.

father's instruction. A mutual sympathy is excited of the highest moment. Their confidenceis encouraged, and they readily apply for more personal counsel and consolation than can be given from the pulpit, and thus they bring us to their cases, doubts and perplexities, that we may make them our own. Indeed how else can we mould our Ministerial counsel in the endearing form of brotherly sympathy, so as to be ready to say—"Who is weak, and I am not weak?"* In what other way can we ascertain the real state of religion among us, its progress or decline, the drawbacks, or the means of advancement, or the besetting temptations of our people, so as to provide them "with the armour of righteousness on the right hand and on the left?"

The *character of this pastoral intercourse* may be defined to be a conciliating, close, affectionate, and spiritual contact with our people, rather in the way of confidence than of Ministerial authority; not indeed sinking the dignity of the Minister of Christ, but clothing it in the garb of a friend. Thus we might enter (not with prying curiosity, but with kindly interest) into their circumstances of family difficulty, their temporal wants, habits of living, connexions (if among the poor) with their masters and neighbours. Prudent advice may be given to the heads of families on the management of their expenses, the education and the government of their children, family worship and instruction, and whatever else makes up their little world.† Suitable admonition may be grafted upon

* 2 Cor. xi. 29.

† George Herbert, speaking of parochial inquiries into the spiritual economy of the house, decides—'If the parson were ashamed of particularizing in these things, he *were not fit to be a parson.*' Ch. xiv.

these particulars, such as could not enter into our pulpit Ministrations with sufficient distinctness for practical utility.

Social visits to our people for the purpose of spreading a general Christian atmosphere around them, may be considered a highly important part of the Pastoral work. What Dr. Watts aptly calls "parlour preaching"*—that is, the ability to introduce the subject of religion seasonably and acceptably into social intercourse, is one of the most valuable talents to the Church of God. It may indeed be in part a natural gift, yet it is capable even under most unfavourable circumstances of unlimited improvement; and they, who have attained the highest excellence in this way, are not those who were most richly endowed by nature, but those who have "stirred up this gift of God that is in them" with the most assiduous diligence. Not that we recommend the introduction of religion as an official task; nor do we suppose that the same mode of introduction is adapted to all circumstances. Nor need we open the subject with a formal or abrupt commencement. If no direct method offers itself, some incident or topic of conversation will often, by an intelligent readiness of address, and by the expression of a glowing heart, be turned to good account. Where the obligation is deeply felt, opportunities generally will be found, or a wakeful spirit of love will make them.

An adaptation of topics is however necessary to give effect to the exercise of this talent. Subjects of instruction may be drawn from matters of general interest. In mixed society, the company of professed Christians may furnish a vehicle of important commu-

* Humble Attempt, pp. 90, 91.

nication with the rest. The difficulties are indeed considerably increased in our intercourse with the higher classes, should such there be, in our parishes. Yet much here may be accomplished by the introduction of truth "in the meekness of wisdom," and the Christian Minister never appears in greater dignity, or speaks with greater effectiveness to the rich, than when his mild decision of heavenly character exhibits the determination to obey God rather than man," and to honour the authority of his commission with pre-eminent regard. It must not be forgotten, that the spiritual care of the rich is a weighty part of our Ministerial burden, for which a strict personal account will be demanded, with an eye to which we must wisely and diligently search out the avenues for the conveyance of the most enduring treasures to their souls.

It may sometimes be needful to furnish ourselves with a store of materials for conducting Christian conversation under circumstances of difficulty, that it may "be good to the use of edifying, ministering grace unto the hearers." Acquaintance with the best practical writers, and Christian Biography, will prove of considerable service. A short time for recollection, for the most suitable disposition of the topics of conversation —for the study of proper variety, and above all, for exercising our dependence upon Almighty aid, may be of the utmost moment. In this spirit of consideration, diligence, and faith, we may expect the feeblest effort to be crowned with an abundant and everlasting blessing; while the best-ordered conversation, in our own spirit, will prove ineffectual for the desired ends.

Associations of the promising young females of the higher or middle rank in our parishes are very desirable. A monthly afternoon or evening thus employed at the

parsonage for the express purpose of working for the poor, or for some other definite object, has been found an important opportunity of drawing together young persons within the sphere of the parochial Ministry, to whom otherwise it is difficult to gain access. The exclusion of unprofitable conversation is easily secured by the introduction of a suitable book, while at the same time subjects of more distinct application may be interspersed with important effect.

We may also remark on this subject our Lord's example in combining kindness to the body with love to the soul. We are often reminded in our Pastoral employ, that "a man's gift maketh room for him."* Our instructions are never so weighty, as when they are connected with the habit or exercise of Christian sympathy; and thus our means combine with our labours for the promotion of the most important objects. In many cases, however, this system would give most baneful encouragement to a false profession. Until therefore the character is well ascertained, it is far better to disjoin than to unite the exercises of temporal and spiritual charity. And indeed in all cases, much discretion is needed to discriminate the objects, seasons, and measure of assistance, without which well-intentioned charity will be one of the greatest evils. The system of our charity must be regulated by personal means, calculated in the spirit of prudence and *self-denial*, and applied to the relief of want—not (except in cases of sickness) to the procurement of indulgence. Its scriptural extent thus regulated, is universal, with however a special regard "to the household of faith."† Next to them, those who combine respectability with

* Prov. xviii. 16. † Gal. vi. 10.

distress will follow, according to their gradations of character and want. As a general rule, the lifting them out of the gulf of despondency by partial assistance, thus giving a stimulus to their own exertions—is most efficient as well as more economical, than a complete deliverance from their difficulties.* The importance of accompanying spiritual counsel with temporal relief is obvious. A tract might sometimes be given, where personal conversation had not been found practicable or seasonable.

We must not however lose the character of the Minister in this conciliating attire, nor must we dismiss our parochial visitation without some more or less direct message from God. Cotton Mather would often leave some awful questions with his people—as—'What have I been doing ever since I came into the world, about the great errand, upon which God sent me into the world? If God should now call me out of the world, what would become of me throughtout eternal ages? Have I ever yet by faith carried a perishing soul unto the Lord Jesus for both righteousness and salvation?'† If we cannot grapple thus closely with their consciences, yet the value of the soul, the evil of sin, the love of the Saviour, the study of the word, the influences of the Spirit, the privilege of secret, family, and public prayer, the importance of personal and family religion, and its intimate connexion with every day's employment—the comfort

* Mr. Thomas Gouge, a non-conformist Divine of considerable estate and large charity used to employ the poor at his own charge, furnishing them with the materials, and giving them the full profit of their work. By this means he indulged the flow of his own charity with the best encouragement to honest industry. Clark's Lives, vol. iii. p. 203.

† See his Life, and Essays to do Good.

of the Gospel, and the work of preparation for eternity —all this will furnish topics of conversation with them of familiar interest and of inexhaustible fullness. Yet in conversing with them, it is most important not to deal in exhortation, however animated and impressive, so as to forget the main object of imparting distinct views of the fundamental doctrines of the Gospel. For it is only through the medium of truth, that any permanent impression can be made, or any work of Divine influence be experienced. In familiar intercourse, no less than in our public Ministry, we must keep in view the distribution of a simple, connected, and enlarged system of Scriptural truth. In pursuing this course throughout our pastoral walk, the connexion also between successive visits may be usefully kept up by means of a text left for consideration. Even if they could not read it, it might be repeated till learned by heart. Something would thus be left behind of practical application; while we should have a useful memorandum in our next visit of the prominent tone of our last conversation, to enable us to continue in the same tract, or to strike out a new path, as circumstances might dictate.

The form of pastoral intercourse may admit of considerable variation. While it may often be wise to combine, with Ministerial instruction, a sympathising interest with their temporal difficulties, at other times our contact with them should be purely upon spiritual principles. Let them be alone with us in the presence of God. The delicacy and weakness of the early impressions need this intimate intercourse. The awakened inquirer is filled, and often at the same time confounded with the engrossing novelty and importance of the subject. He wants a guide, a confidential

counsellor, a tender and experienced friend. He must be taken aside and made to feel himself the object of exclusive solicitude. Others again in a hesitating suspense need the filial confidence of pastoral communion—to have their convictions cherished, re-touched, deepened, and directed more immediately to the Saviour, as the charm that dispels the allurements—as the power that breaks the chains, that still hold them to the world. The serious, humble, and perplexed need the same pastoral confidence to "open their grief, and receive the benefit of ghostly counsel and advice."* In our communication however with these confidential cases, the mode of continued address may be most advantageously exchanged for affectionate catechetical inquiry, which is always found most effectual in eliciting the gradual disclosure of indiviual perplexities, and thus of furnishing us with the most valuable materials for accommodating our instruction to their need.

It is also most important that the communion of a Minister with his flock should be eqalized—that he should shew himself equally the friend, the father, the Minister of all—"a debtor to the wise and to the unwise,"—"without preferring one above another, doing nothing by partiality." He should be to his flock—as the soul to the body—as the head to the members—invigorating every part of the body—the lowest as well as the highest; and contributing to the benefit of every member alike. Indeed it is invariably found, that the suspicion of favouritism fosters a spirit of pride in its objects, and of envy in the rest, and therefore is most destructive to the unity and prosperity of the flock.

* See Exhortation in Communion Service.

As far as this confidential character is preserved, there will be as little occasion to enforce relative rights and obligations, as to fix the precise boundaries of authority and obedience between man and wife, where the spirit of the marriage relation is maintained.

Perhaps this department of the ministry may be deficient in that excitement, which makes it so delightful to preach to a congregation hanging upon our lips. There will be great demands for patience, self-denial, and severe exercise of faith, the cost of which has not always been duly calculated. Henry Martyn confessed that at times he was 'tried with a sinful dislike of his parochial work,' and seemed frequently 'as a stone speaking to stones.'* The Writer was struck with the observation of a local preacher, who has subsequently relinquished his work for secular engagements—that from his experience he considered a Minister's life to be the happiest in the world, and that he had never known such enjoyment, as when in the act of preaching the Gospel. Without feeling inclined to dispute his judgment, he was reminded of his incompetency to decide upon the matter. For whatever be the delight of proclaiming the glad tidings of the Gospel to sinners, yet in the express commission of the parochial Ministry, it is chastened with a weight of responsibility, unknown. The "necessity laid upon us"†—the "watching for souls as they that must give account"‡—the darkness thick as night; and alas! the presage

* Life, p. 60. Dr. Witherspoon observes, on the testimony of conscience to this Ministry—'We may gratify our vanity by preaching, but diligence in private can scarcely arise from any thing but a sense of duty.'

† 1 Cor. ix. 16.

‡ Heb. xiii. 17. 'Let the pastor who trembles not at these words, tremble at least at his own blindness and insensibility.' Quesnel in loco.

of eternal night, so often attendant upon death-beds—the wisdom and tender faithfulness which such scenes imperiously demand—the "travailing in birth" for souls once and "again, until Christ be formed in them"*—the daily contact with sin, obstinacy, and impenitence—and finally, the conflict with the powers of darkness—all these combine in our sacred employment, wakening emotions of the most opposite character, and yet issuing at length in the triumph of faith, so that we are at once "as sorrowful, yet always rejoicing."

This general sketch of the principles of the pastoral work will show at once its laboriousness, and its importance. To acquaint ourselves with the various wants of our people; to win their affections, to give a seasonable warning, encouragement, instruction, or consolation, to identify ourselves with their spiritual interests, in the temper of Christian sympathy, and under a sense of Ministerial obligation; to do this with the constancy, seriousness, and fervid energy which the matter requires, is indeed a work of industry, patience, and self-denial. And yet, how else can we "make full proof of our Ministry," but by ready obedience to the injunction,—"watch thou in all things, do the work of an evangelist."†

CHAPTER II.

TREATMENT OF CASES IN THE PASTORAL WORK.

A VARIETY of cases occur in our Pastoral communication in the many subdivisions of the two grand classes

* Gal. iv. 19. † 2 Tim. iv. 5.

which divide the world ;* and much inefficiency has resulted from their inaccurate treatment. A few hints may be suggested on some of the most important of them—chiefly drawn from the observations of the New Testament Ministry, as illustrative of the several specialties of our Christan Ministrations.

SECTION I.

THE IGNORANT AND CARELESS.†

Such were the multitude in our Lord's time. He instructed them in the spirituality and requirements of his law, mingling the strongest encouragement with his most searching developements of the heart.‡ The nature and immediate duty of faith in himself,§ the awful consequences of rejecting his salvation,‖ uncompromising exhibition of the terms of the Gospel,¶ the most unfettered invitations to all that were willing to accept them, without respect of persons**—these formed the prominent topics of general instruction. In individual cases he improved tangible points of conviction, as means of dealing closely with consciences.†† The exhortations of the Apostles were of course more ex-

* Gregory treats of no less than thirty-six cases—chiefly relative situations, or moral dispositions—with very scanty exercise of spiritual discrimination. De Curâ Past. Part iii. c. 1.

† Baxter's practical treatises contain the most arresting addresses to the unconverted, that probably have ever come from the pen or heart of man. A more decided tone of evangelical doctrine and motive would however have added much to their power. It may be doubted also, whether his method of Christian establishment is as direct and explicit as the freeness, fulness, and simplicity of the gospel would warrant.

‡ Matt. v. vi. vii. § John vi. 29—65. ‖ Matt. xi. 20—24.
¶ Matt. xiii. 44—46. ** Matt. xi. 28—30. John vii. 37.
†† Luke vii. 40—50. xii. 13—21. John iv. 5—26.

plicit. While they warned of the dreadful danger of acting against light, their arrows of conviction were dipped in the blood of Christ. The display of the cross was the ground of their successful pleadings.*

This, like every other class, must be treated according to character. But close remonstrances upon the inexpressible sinfulness and danger of their state, especially in the aggravated guilt of the rejection of the Saviour, cannot be inapplicable to this case. It should be dealt with, like the case of a man on the brink of a precipice, or asleep in the immediate neighbourhood of fire—"saving them with fear, pulling them out of the fire."† A solemn statement has often been owned with an awakened blessing. The man also should be brought, if possible, to a point, and some appeal fastened upon his own declarations. He thinks but little of eternity; yet he hopes to go to heaven, *because he wishes to go there.* Here is ground to work upon—the folly of making his sincere and indolent wishes the ground of his hopes. He would give every thing on a death-bed to be assured of his safety: why is he not in earnest now? He knows Christ as our Saviour, but has no personal interest in him—no sense of want, no spiritual exercises of faith. He needs instruction, like a babe or a heathen, upon the elementary truths of the Gospel. The hardened of this class must be treated with the greatest mildness‡ (else something personal will be imagined), as if we spoke with the most compassionate regard to their condition,§ and with the most "beseeching" entreaties—"Be ye reconciled to God." Let them not suppose, that by denouncing the judgments of God, we seal their condemnation, but rather, that

* Acts ii. iii. iv. xiii. with Zech. xii. 10. † Jude 23.
‡ 2 Tim. ii. 24, 25. § Comp. Jer. iv. 19. Mic. i. 7, 8.

we endeavour to awaken them to escape from it—that we shut them up under wrath, only as the means of bringing them to Christ.* And thus every exposure of wilful infatuation must be connected with the invitation of the Gospel.† Many, who are repelled by remonstrance, and proof against reasoning, have been overpowered by love. The cross of Calvary has arrested the attention of the most ignorant,‡ wrought irresistibly upon the most stubborn,§ and exhibited the vanity and wretchedness of the world to the conviction of its most determined votaries.‖ The exhibition of the Saviour in his all-sufficiency, suitableness, faithfulness, and love, affords ample warrant for enlivening hope in the most desperate cases.

SECTION II.

THE SELF-RIGHTEOUS.

THE young ruler exemplifies our Lord's treatment of this case.¶ Conviction was wanted, and the law was the medium employed. Ignorance of the law is the root of self-deception. An acquaintance with its spirituality unveils the hidden world of guilt and defilement, brings down self-complacency, and lays the sinner prostrate before the cross.** In another case, he made the necessity of an an entire change of heart the instrument of conviction.†† He denounced the enmity or hypocrisy of this spirit as the wilful rejection of his gospel, and as making a "stumbling-stone and rock of

* See Gal. iii. 23, 24.
† 1 Sam. xii. 20—22. Ezra x. 2. Isa. lv. ‡ Matt. xxvii. 54.
§ Acts ix. 4—6. § Gal. vi. 14. ¶ Matt. xix. 16—21.
** Rom. vii. 9. †† John iii.

offence" of the foundation laid for the trust, glory, and salvation of his people. The Epistles to the Romans and Galatians exhibit this principle, intrenched in a system of external religion, without faith, love, contrition, separation from the world, or spiritual desires; or in a dependence on the mercy of God, even in the rejection of the ordained means of the communication of mercy, of which the man has no other notion, than as help to supply deficiences, upon the condition of future amendment.

What makes the case of the self-justiciary so affecting, is, that we have no gospel message, to deliver to him. Our Master "came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance."* The righteous need him not, seek him not, and have no interest in him. Our commission is to sinners; and judging from this man's own account of himself—of the goodness of his heart—the correctness of his conduct—and the multitude and excellency of his meritorious actions—we should conceive him not to belong to that "lost" race, whom "the Son of man came" expressly *and exclusively* "to save."† Indeed, his spiritual ignorance presents a difficulty, at the outset, in dealing with him. We have with all simplicity and plainness laid before him the fallacy of his expectations. We have "judged him out of his own mouth"—nay, we have even compelled him to judge and to condemn himself. Yet the next conversation brings with it the mortification of finding him as far as ever removed even from the comprehension of the gospel. The same dependence upon his own performances is expressed, as if no attempt had been made to undeceive him, and no confession extorted, of the weakness of his foundation.

* Matt. ix. 12, 13. † Luke xix. 10. with xviii. 9—13.

To pursue the self-justiciary into all his "refuges of lies," and to sweep them away before his face, is a most laborious task. When disturbed in his first refuge of his own righteousness, he flies to repentance. Half-distrusting this security, he strengthens it by the merits of his Saviour, by the delusive substitution of sincerity for perfection, or by the recollection of his best endeavours, as a warrant for his hope in the mercy of God. But place him on his death-bed: is he sure that his works are not deficient in weight? that he has attained the precise measure, commensurate with the full and equitable demands of his holy and inflexible Judge? What if "the handwriting" should then be seen "upon the wall," "against him and contrary to him?" Let sin, the law, the Saviour, be exhibited before him, fully, constantly, and connectedly; let the pride, guilt, ingratitude, and ruin of unbelief, be faithfully and affectionately applied to his conscience; let him know that the substitution of any form of doctrine, or course of duties, in the place of a simple reliance on Christ, turns life itself into death, and hinders not only the law, but even the Gospel from saving him.* Who knoweth, but thus he may be humbled, enlightened and accepted, in the renunciation of his own hopes, and the reception of the Gospel of Christ?

SECTION III.

THE FALSE PROFESSOR.

Our Lord sifted this character by applying the spirituality of his doctrines,† the extent of his require-

* Matt. xxi. 33—46. Co p. Acts xiii. 38—41.
† John vi. 60—66.

ments,* the connexion between the heart and conduct,† and the remembrance of the different standards of God and the world.‡ The Apostle, in dealing with him, determines, that the renewal of the heart, and not outward attainments or privileges, evidenced the real Christian.§ The Episte of St. John reduces these chief marks and trials of the heart to love, as the presiding and animating principles of Christian experience and conduct.

It is however difficult to apply these lines of the Scriptural model. The false professor is a very Proteus, evading our grasp by a constant change of form. Yet if *he speaks of his comforts*, how unlike the awakening and serious consolations of the Christian! There is no dread of self-deception, no acquaintance with his own sinfulness, no assault from Satan, because there is no real exercise of grace, or incentive to Christian diligence. *If he speaks of his state before God*, can he abide the Scriptural test of the holiness of God, of the "exceeding breadth" of his law, with its fearful disclosure of his utter depravity and defilement? Can he bear to have the detailed evidences of a radical change, the indispensable importance of an interest in Christ, and the solemn alternative, of "having the Spirit of Christ," or "being none of his"‖—closely prest upon him? Has the awful consideration, that if "Christ is not in him," "though he speak with the tongues of a man and of angels," he is a "reprobate," ever led him to "examine himself, whether he be in the faith, and prove his own self?"¶ *If he speaks of his love* he owns his obligations; but what are his views of the Divine

* Luke xiv. 25—33.
† Matt. vii. 15—23. xii. 33—35.
‡ Luke xvi. 15.
§ Rom. ii 17—29. ix. 6. 7.
‖ Rom. viii. 9.
¶ 2 Cor. xiii. 5.

excellency of the Saviour? Where is his readiness to bear his cross? Where are the exercises of delight in his word, or the evidence of union with his people? Maclaurin admirably observes, 'that the lively and vigorous exercise of love must be judged of by a better standard than the natural outward signs of inward emotions, depending upon constitution and other causes; that a main thing, in which its true strength consists, is its influence on universal holiness in practice, which is a matter of great importance for the discovering the delusions of self-deceivers."* How often is the Saviour's merit made—whether avowedly or not—a support for a bold confidence in insensibility to all spiritual affection and Christian deportment! And therefore, as the sum of the whole inquiry—"Every one that loveth is born of God, and knoweth God. He that loveth not, knoweth not God; for God is love."†

Perhaps, however, we are scarcely warranted to expect the discovery of every case of this kind. Notwithstanding all our vigilance, some counterfeit coin will pass for gold. Judas among the Apostles, and Ananias and others in the Primitive Church, are standing mementos, that it is not our prerogative to search the heart. *Generally*, however, the false professor betrays himself by some instance of inconsistency, which affords a handle of conviction in dealing with him. Such persons are the great stumbling-block to the young and unestablished Christian—and not less so to the world. Their discovery should make us cautious and slow in forming our judgment of characters, while at the same time we must be careful, lest we treat the sincere with coldness and suspicion.

* Essay on Divine Grace, sect. v. † 1 John iv. 7, 8.

SECTION IV.

NATURAL AND SPIRITUAL CONVICTIONS.*

THE power of conviction was strongly and variously exhibited under the Ministry of the New Testament. The thundering discourses of John pierced the consciences of his hearers. Many were interested and partially reformed.† Under our Lord's first sermon, and in the cases of "the sorrowful young man," and "the chief rulers,"‡ there must have been considerable power of conviction; yet (as the want of universal obedience proved) without Divine influence. The practical effects in the sons of Zebedee, Matthew, and Zaccheus on the other hand,§ exhibited spiritual and permanent conviction. Under the Apostolic Ministry, Peter's hearers, Cornelius, Sergius Paulus, Lydia, the jailor, the Gentile hearers at Antioch and other places,‖ showed the fruits of spiritual conviction, in faith, love, and universal holiness; while the frantic Jews under Stephen and Paul, and trembling Felix,¶ displayed the conviction of conscience, overcome by the natural enmity and the love of sin. Few cases more peculiarly need (not, of course, miraculously) the gift of "discerning of spirits," to determine the character and

* Halyburton's Memoirs may be referred to as giving the most graphical delineation of the diversified and conflicting exercises of conviction.

† Matt. iii. 1—6. Luke iii. 10—14. John v. 35. Mark vi. 20.

‡ Luke iv 22—28. Matt. xix. 22. John xii. 42, 43.

§ Matt. iv. 18—22. ix. 9. Luke xix. 1—10.

‖ Acts ii. 37—46. x. xiii. 12. xvi. 14, 15, 30—34. xiii. 44—48. xiv. 1, &c.

¶ Acts vii. 54. xiii. 45. xxiv. 25.

sincerity of the conviction, in order to its safe and successful treatment. In the early stages of sincerity, it is often a mixture of legal and evangelical principle, resulting more from the sense of sin, than from apprehension of Christ, and productive rather of alarm than of contrition—of terror than of tenderness and love.* Self-deceitfulness never shows itself more than in a state of conviction. Some are neither at ease in their sin, nor heartily seeking for deliverance. Perhaps they will yield partially to the Gospel, but they rest short of a full restoration. We must however be most careful, that we do not heal the wound, before it has been searched and probed to the bottom.† A slight healing is the road to the most fatal delusion. Much wisdom however is requisite to form an accurate judgment of the case, to separate what is natural from what is spiritual. If, indeed, the excitement be merely the irritation of natural conscience, by the law, it will be, as with St. John's hearers, transitory and inoperative.‡ Conviction, exclusively legal, will rest in sullen dissatisfaction, and must be excited with the danger of yielding to the entanglements of unbelief, with the urgency of an immediate reception of the Saviour in

* Perhaps the difference between legal and evangelical conviction may be illustrated by the comparison of Acts ii. 37. with Zech. xii. 10. The one precedes, the other follows, faith.

† Nothing can be more judicious than Calvin's remarks on this point. 'Ubi homines senserint, quam graviter delinquerint, illic non statim curandus est dolor, quemadmodum impostores deliniunt conscientias, ita ut sibi indulgeant et se fallant inanibus blanditiis. Medicus enim non statim leniet dolorem, sed videbit, quid magis expediat; fortè magis augebit, quia necessaria erit acrior purgatio. Sic etiam faciunt prophetæ, cum vident trepidas conscientias, non statim adhibent blandas consolationes; sed potiùs ostendunt, non esse ludendum cum Deo, et solicitant, sponte currentes, ut sibi proponant terribile Dei judicium quò magis ac magis humilientur.' In Joel ii.

‡ John v. 35.

his invitations to the unworthy, with the self-delusion and certain ruin of abiding under present convictions, and with the assured acceptance of the weakest act of faith. The reception of the Saviour is a proof of spiritual life in conviction, and the spring of its continued exercise. Thus both Peter's and Stephen's hearers were pierced—the former only spiritually changed. Whatever feeling, therefore, brings us to Christ, heartily weary of sin, sensible of danger, thirsting for mercy, and anxious to walk by the rules of the Gospel, is the convincing power—not of conscience, but of the Spirit of God. But what tenderness is required, lest we "break the bruised reed!" Let the wide distinction between the indwelling and the indulgence of sin—between its occasional prevalence and its allowed rule—be accurately marked; nay, even the overruling of its lamented incursions in deepening the contrition, establishing the watchfulness, exercising and strengthening the faith of the afflicted penitent. Let him view the strong encouragement to repeated application to Christ. If he be really mourning over his guilt, and desiring the pardon and love of the Saviour (a frame of mind inconsistent with the least indulgence of sin), he has his promise for the rest of his soul. In bringing his wants and desires to the Gospel, he will find increasing light, consolation, and strength, for the maintenance of the spiritual conflict, until judgment "is brought forth unto victory."*

* For some most discriminate views and encouraging directions relative to these cases, consult Bowles' Past. Evang. Lib. ii. c. 19, 20.

SECTION V.

THE YOUNG CHRISTIAN.

JUDGMENT, experience, tenderness, and acquaintance with the natural character, circumstances, and habits of the individual, must direct the treatment of this most important case. The young Christian is awakened and excited, but very imperfectly enlightened. There is much self-deception and self-righteousness. *His repentance* is sincere, but partial, more exercised from the trouble than from the sinfulness of sin, but slightly connected with faith, and little conversant with the habitual backsliding of the heart from God. His *faith*, though genuine, is confused; rather a feeling or a train of feelings, than an influential principle; associated with comfort rather than with holiness; its principle confounded with its exercise, or different exercises mistaken for each other. There is but little of "knowledge and judgment,"* in the actings of *his love;* so that, though productive of pleasing impressions, it is not that uniform and powerful energy of Christian self-denial and devotedness. There are therefore in him many infirmities to exercise our forbearance, many difficulties to excite our sympathy; and much discrimination is necessary to adapt our treatment to his immature Christian attainment.† Glad should we be, could he reach at one flight the summit of Christian perfection. But meanwhile, let us not, in violation, of our Master's instructions, expect from him the higher requirements of Christian maturity.

* Phil. i. 9.

† Matt. ix. 14—17 and Calv. in loco.

As the general rule, he must be "fed with milk, not with meat."* Yet this must include a *full and explicit exhibition of the Saviour* before him. Let Him be set forth in His personal dignity—in His Mediatorial character—in His relation to his people—that his heart may be drawn to Him in the simplicity of the Gospel—that he may feel Him to be his life, and continually come to Him, "that he might have life more abundantly."† Our Lord instructed his disciples gradually in a clearer revelation of himself, as the means of their advancement ;‡ for doubtless to "grow in the knowledge of" Him is the most efficient means of growing in grace."§

The conflict of faith is also suitable instruction for this case. The perplexities of our Lord's disciples arose from their indistinct perception of the character and exercises of faith. They knew nothing of its power in realizing unseen help; and, connecting it only with the sensible comfort of their Master's presence, they were utterly unprepared for any emergency in his temporary absence from them.‖ And thus the young Christian needs to be correctly informed in the nature of faith, as an habitual dependence upon Christ, grounded upon the sense of need, and the Scriptural warrant of his power and love. This principle tends indeed to produce comfort, but perhaps it is most vigorous in a state of conflict,¶ when striking its roots deeper in the earth, in humility, contrition, and self-abasement; so that spiritual depression (when it does not directly arise from the indulgence of sin) is the

* 1 Cor. iii 2. † John x. 10.
‡ See Matt. xvi. 21. xvii. 22, 23. and John xiv—xvi.
§ 2 Peter iii. 18.
‖ Comp. Matt. xiv. 24—26. and Mark ix. 14. with Matt. xvii. 19, 20. ¶ Job xiii. 15.

trial of its reality, and the peculiar season for its exercise.

Let him also be directed in *his happy experience* to be thankful, but watchful; lest it become the occasion of his pride, rather than the matter of his praise, his security rather than his encouragement, his rest rather than his enjoyment. *In clouded experience*, let him ask his heart—"Is there not a cause?" Let him be humbled, not discouraged—quickened to prayer, not hindered by unbelief. Let him suspect his heart, not the promises of God. Let him see his own weakness and unworthiness, without forgetting the power, and love of his Saviour. The changes in the Divine dispensations are most needful for his Christian establishment, showing what God can do for him, and how little he can do without God. Let him know, that the assurance of faith is best realized in humility, self-denial, love, separation from the world, and general consistency of conduct, the absence or deficiency of which would cast a shade over the genuineness of faith in the most delightful exercises of experience.

The nature, certainty, and requisites of the Christian cross must be insisted upon. Our Lord set the cross plainly before his disciples, at a very early stage,* to prepare them by a wise calculation of the cost for the impending trials; an admirable pattern for the Christian teacher, now that the profession of the Gospel is so often taken up in the dream of a flowery path, or with little serious inconvenience, as if the crown were easily won, or ever could be won without the daily cross—or that there could be a moment for the young Christian, when the denial of his own will, wisdom, or lust, will

* Matt. x. 34—39.

not be imperatively called for. No outward circumstances of the church can alter these requisitions. He is not forced to be a Christian; but if he will be a follower of Christ, these are the terms.* There is indeed no need to complain of their strictness; for he will find increasing necessity for them to the end. The discipline of his mind to the wisest regulations, the loosening of his heart from the world, the support of the grace of his Divine Master, and a closer conformity to his spirit and example, will be the happy and permanent fruits.

"*The spirit of a sound mind*" must also be strongly inculcated. A defect in judgment is a frequent attendant upon the early stage of the Christian profession. The mind loses its balance under the first influence of a strong excitement. The affections are tumultuous rather than rational. Like "the crackling of thorns under a pot," they blaze furiously, but with little heat and speedy extinction. Enthusiasm, delusion, foolish and unjustifiable practices, often spring up with serious personal injury, and much to the hindrance and discredit of the Gospel. Hours are sometimes wasted even over the Bible in a superficial and irregular course, under the mistaken conception, that not only vain pleasures, but solid pursuits are inconsistent with the exclusive claims of Christian devotedness. Duties also, instead of finding their proper place, are suffered to interfere with each other, and even sometimes neglected upon the same mistaken supposition that all our time must be spent in reading and prayer. Thus also one set of graces is exhibited to the exclusion of others of a different character but equal importance;

* Matt. xvi. 24.

so that a mis-shapen figure presents itself in the place of the symmetry of Christian graces in "the beauty of holiness." The watch needs a regulator as well as a main spring, to maintain the wheels in that uniform, harmonious, and subservient motion, which accurately represents the succession of time. Every disposition must be exercised in its due proportion and combination, if the young Christian would aspire to the high privilege of "adorning the doctrine of God our Saviour in all things."

As an illustration of this Christian consistency, we may suggest the importance of inculcating conformity, and obedience to those connected with them (especially where they oppose) in all things consistent with the authority of God. Young Christians (those particularly who are young in age) often offend here. Their zeal is not tempered with humility and self-denial, and they not unfrequently bring needless offence upon religion, and bring themselves into difficulties, which they are afterwards convinced might have been avoided. Where the natural character is yielding, firmness in withstanding worldly compliances should be urged. Where it is naturally firm, submission—especially to parents—should be pressed; it too often having been found, that their warm zeal for God has proved to be the indulgence of their self-will and impatience of restraint. Let it be ever enforced, that nothing but the positive obligation of a Divine command can set aside the deference so justly due to parental authority.

It might also be a wise part of the Ministerial superintendence of the young Christian, to provide for him some friend, whether older or of his own age, whose sympathy, experience, and consistency might prove of material service. But as regards our own counsel,

admonition, and encouragement—"*Press forward,*" must be our constant watchword. Let him not satisfy himself with being a sincere Christian. Let him seek to be an advancing Christian. Let him remember, that the attainments he has made, are but the commencement, and not the finishing of his work. Let him constantly examine and exercise his faith. Let him guard against neglecting his own heart—letting down his watch in security—indolence in the use of appointed means—needless fellowship with the world—inordinate enjoyment of lawful pleasure—neglect of the Word of God—formality in duty—the power of besetting sins and temptations. Let him expect that the rest that he has found, as the fruit of holy violence,* will abide with him in the same course of conflict. Let him know, that the privileges which he had anticipated at some indefinitely distant period, were his portion from the earliest dawn of his faith, as being not attached to its degree, but to its sincerity; and his clearer apprehension of them, so far from giving license to indolence, will furnish a fresh stimulus for renewed and increased exertion. He will know forgiveness of sin as his present possession,† union with Christ as the direct source of his spiritual life‡—"springing up," by the power of the Spirit in his heart, "unto everlasting life."§ Thus receiving the promise, the Author, the earnest, and first-fruits of salvation—he "receives salvation" itself, as "the end of his faith."‖

* Matt. xi. 12. † 1 John ii. 12. ‡ John xv. 1—5.
§ John iv. 14. ‖ 1 Peter i. 9.

SECTION VI.

THE BACKSLIDER.*

WHAT Minister is not conversant with this most affecting case? Unsoundness of doctrine, love of the world, the indulgence of sin, and the neglect of prayer, are palpable causes of backsliding. The power of unbelief, and the want of Christian establishment, are causes less obvious, but probably not less frequent or less hurtful. The unsettled professor, not having assured his title to the promises of support, cannot plead it; and not applying for strength upon the Scriptural warrant, is left to his own unassisted weakness. His comforts (if indeed he could speak of them) not being built upon a personal interest in the Gospel, were feelings, fancies, delusions—not faith—no solid ground of support.

Sometimes we find the *backslider in a hardened state*, advancing rapidly on the high road to apostasy. Instead of acknowledgment of sin, there is a flinching from conviction. Solemn recollections—"Where is the blessedness that ye spake of?"†—are the thoughts of eternity peaceful?—the awful declarations of Scripture,‡ or (as in David's case) a sudden and unexpected self-accusation may however produce conviction.§ Yet until the man begins to feel restless and miserable, the case is hopeless.

* The reader is referred to a tract by the late Andrew Fuller, for the most full and instructive description of this case, and of the best mode of treatment.

† Gal. iv. 15, also iii. 1—4. ‡ Such as Prov. xiv. 14.

§ 2 Sam. xii. 1—13.

The *convinced backslider* should be treated with pity, as if we really grieved over him—not spared, but yet felt for—his conscience probed, yet with tender recollection—the depth of his departure pointed out, yet himself "restored in the spirit of meekness."* This was the treatment of the incestuous Corinthian; first handled with severity, in order to produce conviction; when convinced, sustained and confirmed in the most tender regard, "lest haply such a one should be swallowed up with overmuch sorrow," and "Satan should get advantage of" the church.† Let him be exhorted to diligent use of means, and a resolute abandonment of the ways and intercourse which had drawn him aside. Let him be guided afresh, as if he had never known the way to the foot of the cross, there to "look on him, whom he has pierced, and mourn."‡ The way is open for him as for any willing sinner, and the welcome equally assured. The same love that pardons sins, "heals backslidings."§ Jer. ii—iv. 1. and the whole book of Hosea deserve most careful study for the treatment of this case. The instance of Peter will furnish an individual illustration of the tender exercise of love employed at once to deepen conviction, and to complete the restoration.‖ The power of this love is often displayed in marking the subsequent experience and conduct with a deeper hatred of sin—a more contrite abasement in the recollection of helplessness—a more careful circumspection, with a more constant attention to the means of grace, and with a higher value of the Saviour.

* Gal. vi. 1.
† 1 Cor. v. 1—7. with 2 Cor. ii. 1—11.
‡ Zech. xii. 10.
§ Micah vii. 18. Hosea xiv. 4.
‖ Luke xxii. 61, 62. Mark xvi. 7. John xxi. 15—17.

SECTION VII.

THE UNESTABLISHED CHRISTIAN.

THE *sincerity* of our Lord's disciples under his personal Ministry, was not more evident than their *want of establishment* in faith and knowledge. In many of our people we mark a similar defectiveness in Christian knowledge or spiritual perception. Grace is more in the seed than in the operation. It wants exercise to draw it out into practical influence, that love may be more fervent; faith more active; prayer, if not more frequent, yet more spiritual. The Apostle did not treat this case with the soothing tone of sympathy, but with the strong stimulants of conviction and reproof.* And indeed such professors, if they do not actually come short, at least "seem to come short."† If they are alive, it is a bare sickly existence, with little power of exertion or capacity for enjoyment. They undervalue even their scanty measure of progress, else would they reach forth for higher attainments and more aspiring hopes. True grace sets an edge upon the appetite, rather than satisfies it. But where unbelief is faintly resisted, indolence substituted for exertion, and they are "lying on their faces," instead of exercising painful diligence in their spiritual interests,‡ "the things that remain," for want of being "strengthened," will be "ready to die."§

Their deficiency in the Evangelical standard also appears in the narrowness of their Christian charity, and in their want of exertion for the spiritual good

* Heb. v. 11—14.
† Ibid. iv. 1.
‡ Josh. vii. 10. with 2 Pet. i. 5—10.
§ Rev. iii. 2.

of their neighbourhood, or the general cause of Christ. Some of our people, of whose Christian sincerity we feel no reasonable doubt, evidence but a faint influence of constraining love in their unconcern for the moral wretchedness around them.

Want of sincerity in the reception of truth, will usually appear in the investigation of this stationary case. The love of holiness, and the desire of Christian advancement, were not the ends proposed. The truth was received as a speculative dogma, not "in the love of it;" and, therefore, as it was loosely held, it was readily surrendered. Neglect of the Ministry (the institution ordained expressly for the prevention of this evil)* is the frequent cause of this defective profession. The Apostles exhibited the fullest display of evangelical privileges, not only for the consolation of the established, but probably for the excitement and conviction of the indolent. For what do they know of being "filled with all joy and peace in believing?" How little comprehension have they "*with all saints*, what is the height, and depth, and breadth of the love of Christ," as the medium of being "filled with all the fulness of God!" Should we not warn them against resting in the perception of truth, without realizing its experimental and practical influence, which would establish their judgment in the apprehension of its value, and give a sufficient impulse for its retention? And should we not labour to stir up a close self-inquiry, an earnest habit of prayer, deeper self-acquaintance and self-abasement, increasing activity in Christian obedience, and a stronger excitement to ascend the elevated stations of faith, that they might gain more extensive, animating, and heavenly prospects?

* Eph. iv. 8—14.

SECTION VIII.

THE CONFIRMED AND CONSISTENT CHRISTIAN.

CONSISTENCY in every branch of Christian temper and practice is requisite to form the character here noticed. The Writer feels little qualified to suggest any applicable remarks for this case. The sum of the prayers and exhortations of the Apostles for their converts, was, that their views of doctrine might be enlarged, their sense of obligation deepened, their standard of practice more elevated, their enjoyment of privileges more exciting, and their fruitfulness more abundant. The Apostle prescribes a different mode of treatment to other cases.* He would have us substitute instruction in the deepest and most solid truths, in the room of the elementary principles of the Gospel, entering largely into the counsels of God concerning his people—the security of his covenant on their behalf —the more full exhibition of his perfections in the work of their redemption—of the office and work of Christ, and of the Divine life derived from him. By this system of "strong meat" adapted to their adult state in the Christian life, they will be "nourished up in the words of faith and of sound doctrine," and "their sense will be yet further exercised in spiritual discernment. By this course of treatment we shall expect to observe in them a marked difference from the noviciates in religion, where it would be unreasonable to expect mellow fruit from young scions. The same acts indeed

* Heb. v. 14. with vi. 1—3.

belong to the young and to the old Christian, but in the latter case they are more grounded and solid. Christian ordinances are attended by the young with greater ardency, but with the old, from deeper principle. The affections in the young are more vigorous and lively. But what is gradually lost in the natural decay of their sensible operations, is abundantly compensated in the improvement of their understanding, resolution, and judgment. Spiritual subjects have changed their seat in the soul. If they are less sensibly exercised in the affections, they are more permanently fixed in the mind. The choice is more settled, intelligent, and uniform. If there be less of spiritual excitement, there is a deeper insight into spiritual corruption, a deeper constancy in the habit of the Gospel.

Apart from affliction—a most important means of grace to the Christian,*—the continual flowings of spiritual life and joy are the principles of his advancing knowledge and holiness. His release from the dominion of sin, his fellowship with Christ in his sufferings, death, and resurrection,† his continual view, and application of the cross, constrain him with irresistible and most delightful influence. "The beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord" with admiring, adoring, and trusting view, advances progression to his image.‡ As he is looked to as our spiritual head, "the whole body grows up into him in all things, and being joined together and compacted" in its several joints and members, "maketh increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in love."§ And thus Christian love—enlarged—extensive—"abounding yet more and more"—evidences the growing conformity to

* See John xv. 2. 1 Pet. v. 10. † Rom. vi.
‡ 2 Cor. iii. 18. § Eph. iv. 15, 16.

the Divine image. It is difficult to turn to human writings for a full exhibition of this Christian glory. Mr. Romaine has drawn, so far as it extends, a simple and beautiful portrait; imperfect however, as wanting the practical features of the Scriptural sketch. Baxter has thrown out its features with much fire, and force, and power of enchantment; but he has often so disguised his figure with his own constrained feelings, and metaphysical trammels, that it seems like an Angel in fetters. Perhaps Leighton may be said to have given the full portrait, both in his writings and in his character, with as little touch of human infirmity, as can be looked for till the brighter days of the church.

Yet with this exhibition of love as the grand material and means of edification, must be combined a positive enforcement of Evangelical warning. David has expressly acknowledged the value of this use of Scripture;* nor are the Apostles deterred by any fear of legality from intermingling it with the language of exhortation and encouragement. The importance of their judicious adaptation to the circumstances of the Christian is obvious. For though they have but one meaning in themselves, they apply to the different classes of men with most happy effects. To the ungodly, "the law worketh wrath" in the apprehension of the displeasure of their enemy and judge. The same threatenings with the righteous will produce a holy fear of God, a godly fear of sin, and a quickening stimulus to the use of the appointed means of preservation. Thus the execution of the judgments of God upon the wicked, whilst it increases the believer's love for the holiness of his dispensations, exercises his mind with a wholesome fear of a "jealous God."† As therefore a prominent display of

* Psalm cxix. 11.

† See Psalm cxix. 119, 120.

"the terrors of the Lord" would savour of the covenant that "gendereth unto bondage," so an exclusive view of the promises of the Gospel, blotting out all enforcement of its threatenings, would not only incur the guilt of mutilating the word of God, and failing to "warn the wicked of his way;" but would deprive the believer of a divinely appointed means of his preservation and establishment.

We have an admirable pattern of this mixed mode of address in the Apostle's exhortation to the Hebrews. Though he styles them—"holy brethren, and partakers of the heavenly calling," he does not spare to "rebuke them sharply," as "dull of hearing;" even setting before them the doom of their rebellious fore-fathers, and of miserable apostates among themselves, as an incentive to that holy fear which is always a necessary part of the grace of perseverance; while he concludes the whole with an expression of his good opinion concerning them, and the "strong consolation" arising from the immutable certainty of the foundation of their hope.* Thus while the dark ground occupies so large a portion of the canvass, it is evidently with a view of displaying more vividly the lustre and attraction of love shedding its beams over the gloom.

The Writer feels deeply impressed with the responsibility of this individual and discriminating Ministry. The recollection that every word we speak to the several classes has a bearing upon their eternal state—clothes it with inexpressible importance, as it respects themselves, our own consciences and the Church of

* Heb. iii—vi.

God. The conscience is the subject matter of our office, and in its various exercises and perplexities requires the most skilful treatment. To qualify ourselves for this most anxious service, much acquaintance with the human heart, and with our own heart in particular, is requisite—a clear knowledge and practical views of the Gospel—a careful study of the best works on spiritual, casuistical, and experimental divinity.* Most of all—a spirit of humble and importunate prayer for constant and increased supplies of the wisdom which is from above." In the direction also of the several cases, an acquaintance with the constitutional temperament of the individuals is obviously most important. A sanguine temperament would give a delusive appearance of ardour and intensity to religious impressions. A constitutional depression would obscure the symptoms even of a genuine work of faith. An undue confidence, or backwardness, will require a different tone of address—to be restrained, cautioned, or encouraged, as the matter will require.

The Writer pretends not to have given in this detail an accurate directory for the treatment of these several cases. The appearances both of sin and piety are so diversified, that he has never yet gathered, either from Writers or from Ministers, any rules, which did not

* In this respect the study of the Puritan and Non-conformist Divines is of the highest importance. Such works as the "Morning Exercises at Cripplegate,"—Owen's and Flavel's Treatises—Baxter's Christian Directory—Perkins, Hildersham, Bolton, Greenham, Gurnal, will abundantly repay a careful perusal. Pike and Hayward's Cases of Conscience will also be read with interest by Ministers who conceive with Philip Henry—'That the true learning of a gospel Minister consists not in being able to talk Latin fluently, or to dispute in philosophy, but in being able to speak a word in season to weary souls.' Life. p. 207. A small work by Rev Robert Philip, on Christian Experience," has drawn out some of these cases with much judgment and interest.

leave many of his cases unprovided for. The utmost attempt has been to sketch a few broad lines and trains of conversation, which might in some measure meet the prominent difficulties, and be readily filled up by the exercise of the mind under Divine teaching at the moment of emergency. On one particular, however, we cannot mistake, that to all, of every class and at every stage, the attractions of the cross of Christ must be unfolded, and its heavenly glory made intelligible, for every purpose of conviction and conversion, of instruction and sanctification; for the establishment, comfort, and eternal salvation of all who are willing to receive it. It is of equal power to break the hard heart, or to heal the broken heart; and in the faint exhibition, the disguise, or the misapprehension of it, no power can be expected from God to "give testimony to the word of his grace."

CHAPTER III.

THE VISITATION OF THE SICK.

NEGLECT or error in this Divinely appointed office* is a main cause of Ministerial inefficiency, and involves consequences far more responsible than medical inattention or unskilfulness—the trifling away or mis-improving opportunities deeply connected with the salvation of immortal souls. 'This intolerable defect in Ministers,' as an old Writer observes—'never shows itself more shamefully, or with greater hurt, than when men have need of spiritual help, at the hour of death,

* James v. 14.

or in time of great affliction.'* 'Opiate divinity'† is too often administered to slumbering souls, instead of the awakening excitements of anxious alarm. Perhaps no where do conscientious Ministers feel their faith and seriousness more painfully exercised—and no where do they realize more sensibly the importance of "rightly dividing the word of truth." The temper of the individual (who sometimes hates the remedy more than the disease), and the recollection of the fearful mischiefs which might result from a small error in his treatment,‡ add much to the difficulty, so that (as seems to be intimated) it is a work for "one among a thousand."§

The promiscuous use of a general form cannot be recommended.‖ The 67th Canon determines the use of the appointed service, 'as the Preacher shall think most needful and convenient'—a wise and necessary discretion, since—whatever be its excellence, it partakes of the disadvantage of 'not being particular enough for each several occasion.'¶

In offering a few hints upon the subject—we would note—The *duty of weighing our words, with much*

* Marbury's Exposition of Psalm xxxii. 5. Augustine calls such Ministers *desolators*, instead of *consolators*. Habitual negligence in the visitation of the sick, is punished by deposition by the strict law of the Scotch kirk. Smith's Lectures, xxiv. We need scarcely observe, that this obligation includes—'not visiting barely, when one is sent for: he is to go as soon as he hears that any of his flock are ill.' Burnet's Pastoral Care, ch. viii.

† Winchester's Ser. p. 181.

‡ In medicinâ nihil exiguum est.—Galen.

§ See Job xxxiii. 23. ‖ See Isaiah xxviii. 27.

¶ Bishop Wilkin's Gift of Prayer, p. 12. Indeed the service, as presuming the sick person to be a penitent, is obviously inappropriate to the melancholy multitude of cases of an opposite description—so that, as Bishop Barrington justly observed—'in many cases the funeral service might be used with almost as much propriety as the office for the sick.' Ch. 1797. p. 31. Bishop Horsley gives the same judgment on the exclusive use of the service' Charges, p. 153.

previous meditation and prayer upon the case. It too often meets us in the regular routine, and is counselled only by the suggestion of the moment. 'It is rather strange'—as Osterwald remarks—'that Ministers should take so much pains to prepare their discourses for the pulpit, and take so little pains to prepare for what they should say to the sick, or how to conduct their visits to them, though it is one of the most difficult and important offices in the Ministry.' Habitual readiness without much considerate and prayerful exercise will afford no warranted expectations of our Master's blessing.

Our approach to the sick should be in the garb of a friend. Our aim (unlike that of the medical attendant), is often unconnected in his mind with any definite prospect of benefit. It is more necessary therefore that we should enter fully into the sufferer's case—that our spirit, manners, and voice should exhibit manifest sympathy—such as our Master displayed, when he stopped the bier at the gate of Nain, and wept at the tomb of Lazarus.* Nothing more successfully engages confidence, than when the official garb shows—"a brother, that is born for adversity."†

We *should endeavour to obtain an accurate knowledge of his case.* The physician cannot prescribe without feeling the pulse, inquiring concerning the diet, and habits of life. He takes pains to converse with friends, and gains his information from every quarter. Thus must we gather from the best information—and as far as possible, from Christian sources—such as a Christian parent, master or neighbour; sources however, which must be selected and improved with the most cautious

* Luke vii. 12, 13. John xi. 35. † Prov. xvii. 17.

prudence. Something from the mouth of the individual will give the most pointed ground of our address—and a few kind and confidential inquiries will invite his confidence—and draw out some close and serious recollections on the state and prospects of his soul. In doubtful cases we may profitably advert to these personal inquiries, adding our plain and serious view of his state, and leading him to earnest prayer for increasing self-acquaintance.

The *importance of Ministerial faithfulness* cannot be too highly estimated. This is not a time for commonplace topics of trifling, or for "prophesying smooth things." To be plain and studiously faithful in our exhibition of truth must be our first concern. The greatest danger on this point arises from the sufferer's willingness to be deluded, and his greedy desire for comfort—from the false tenderness of his misguided friends, and from the self-pleasing indolence of our own hearts.* Yet he must know his real condition, which indeed either way is for his advantage—that he may enjoy the comfort of its soundness, or be saved from the certain ruin of his own delusion—'While you are tender'—Mr. Mason charges us—'be sure to be faithful, and have respect to the approbation of your conscience afterwards. Remember that you are a Minister of the Gospel, and must not sacrifice the cause of truth and godliness to a false shame or tenderness.'†

* 'Our chief danger in the present age seems to be in erring on the side of candour and complaisance, and not dealing with mankind with sufficient plainness and fidelity. Many of my people have died, with whom my conscience has afterwards accused me of not dealing so plainly as I should.'—Orton's Letters to Dissenting Ministers, i. 59. 60. Melius est cum severitate diligere, quam cum lenitate decipere. Augustine.

† Student and Pastor. By the author of the celebrated treatise on Self-knowledge, p. 114—a work with many serious hints upon

Both extremes, however, must be avoided—we must be exclusive on neither side; but, like skilful physicians, must mingle gentle ingredients with the strongest corrosives,* labouring to work a solid not a sudden cure, and never giving a pain but from the necessity of the case, and with the purpose of effecting a radical cure.

Nor must we forget to *insist upon the love of him that afflicts.* Here we see the clearest display of the paternal character of God,† the contemplation of which seems to have been a source of peculiar consolation to the Saviour in his bitterest moments of suffering,‡ as indeed it is most supporting to his sinful children.§ It is a Father's love that strikes, in order to humble his rebellious child; and that supports his humble child with such sustaining peace, that he kisses the rod, while it is in the act of smiting him; and feels that comfort in the endurance of affliction, which he had anticipated in its removal. In this connexion also, we must *point out the reason, the end, the duties, the privileges of affliction,*‖—that it—"cometh not from the dust," or without the Providence of God—that it would never be permitted at all without necessity—that its duties are self-inquiry, watchfulness, submission,

the Ministry. Its scanty and defective views of Christian doctrine have been lately Socinianized by the editorial labours of Dr. Toulmin.

* For specimens of this healing exercise of faithfulness, see 1 Sam. xii. 20—22. Ezra x. 2. See some valuable hints in Cecil's Remains—'On Visiting Death-beds.'

† Psalms ciii. 13. with Heb. xii. 5—11.

‡ Matt. xxvi. 39, 42. John xviii. 11.

§ Comp. Lam. iii. 22—33.

‖ See Archbishop Laud's Manual of Prayers in Stearne's Tractat. de Visit. Infirm. Clergyman's Instructor, p. 392. Cradock's Knowledge and Practice (ch. xxix.) gives a full and edifying view of this subject.

faith, and thankfulness—and that the privileges will be realized in the removal of his sin, the more abundant influence of the Spirit of prayer, the loosening of his heart from the world, and a more intense fixedness of affection upon his heavenly inheritance. Thus when his soul is as a weaned child, and he is ready to do and suffer precisely what the Lord would have him, he will receive all the benefit intended by these visitations of love.

It is of vast *moment to make Christ the sum of our instructions to the sick.* This indeed is the specific object of our commission,* as the "Interpreter" of these painful dispensations, to exhibit the "uprightness" of God in punishing and pardoning sin—"having found a ransom"—and thus to lift up in the sick chamber, as in the camp of Israel, the brazen serpent, with the warrant and inscription—"Look and live." Instructions of every kind must be considered *essentially defective*, that do not centre upon this point.

We cannot forbear to remark *the comfort of going to the sick only as the Lord's instruments.* This is the warrant of our commission—"Messengers"—sent by God for this express purpose. What a relief from that excessive anxiety, which often hinders the freedom and cheerfulness of our spirit. And what a warrant to pray in faith for God's power in his own ordinance, which, like every divine institution, carries a promise with it, the acknowledgment of which is only hindered by our own unbelief!

As a general rule it must be recommended to conclude instructions with short but serious prayer: with as direct and detailed a reference as possible to the

* Job xxxiii. 23, 24.

circumstances and spiritual condition of the sick, and with a view to sketch before him the precise petitions and blessings suited to his state.

It is scarcely necessary to observe the peculiar caution requisite in administering the sacrament to the sick. While to the Christian pilgrim it may be the true viaticum for the last stage of his journey; by formalists, and even by the careless, 'it is desired, as the passport on the road to heaven, which they expect will answer their purpose at once.'* A familiar exposition of John vi. would be the best preparation for the reception of the sacrament, not as enforcing the obligatory commemorative command (to which there was no immediate reference), but as illustrating the nature and operations of that faith, which alone qualifies the communicant to "discern the Lord's body."

The instruction of the attendants upon the sick is obviously connected with this subject.† Indeed it is often a most important medium of indirect address to the sick. The scene before their eyes presents much matter for personal impression in the vivid picture of the consequence of sin, the vanity of the world, the nearness and unspeakable importance of eternity, and of an instant preparation for it. The immense responsibility of their station should be deeply inculcated, with the bounden obligation to add the care of the soul of the sick to the care of his body, to keep off the too successful diversion of impertinent

* Stonehouse's Sick Man's Friend—a work of defective Christian doctrine, but of much valuable practical detail, chiefly compiled from Doddridge, Mason, and others.

† 'In every thing that a Minister says to a sick person, he ought to keep three things steadily in view—the influence which it may have on the person if dying—the influence which it may have on him if he recover—and the influence it may have on persons in health who are about him.' Gerard's Pastoral Care, p. 168.

topics, to improve seasonable opportunities of reading or suggesting suitable instructions, and to seek in special prayer a permanent blessing both upon him and upon themselves.

Nor must the *convalescent be omitted in our consideration.* Bishop Burnet recommends us to exact from the sick solemn promises of renovation of life in the event of their restoration.* Yet must these promises be inculcated in the deepest sense of utter helplessness, and entire dependance on Divine strength. We might say to each of them—"Behold, thou art made whole, sin no more, lest a worse thing come upon thee."† To awakened and softened minds we might recommend daily consideration of the lessons which they have learned in this school,‡ daily prayer to keep alive the teaching of the spirit in their season of affliction,§ daily recollection of their peculiar trials,‖ daily renewal of their sick-bed vows,¶ and daily prayerful "remembrance" of "them that are in adversity, as being themselves also in the body."**

CHAPTER IV.

PASTORAL MINISTRY OF THE YOUNG.

THE consideration of this Ministry is of primary importance in the detailed system of our work. Such was the judgment of one, eminently qualified to speak

* Past. Care. ch. viii. Comp. Stearne's Tractatus, ut supra—a treatise with most admirable systematic rules, but with an almost total destitution of enlivening views of the gospel.—Clergyman's Instructor, p. 408.

† John v. 14.
‡ Ps. xcii. 12. cxix. 67, 71, 75.
§ Isaiah lxiii. 15—19. lxiv. 1.
‖ Lam iii. 19—21.
¶ Psalm ciii. cxvi.
** Heb. xiii. 3.

upon every division of the pastoral work—'My first and greatest success,' says Baxter, 'was upon the youth; and so it was, that when God had touched the hearts of the young with the love of goodness, and delightful obedience to the truth, in various instances their friends, their fathers, and their grandfathers, who had grown old in an ignorant and worldly state, did many of them fall into a liking and loving of piety, induced by their love to their children, who now appeared so much wiser and better, and more dutiful to them.'* So sensible was Dr. Doddridge of the importance and difficulty of this Ministry, that he resolved at his entrance into the Ministry—'I will often make it my humble prayer, that God would teach me to speak to children in such a manner, as may make early impressions of religion upon their hearts.'† Mr. Brown of Haddington observes of himself—'I lament that I have not been more diligent in catechizing and exhorting the children in my congregation. I am persuaded that these exercises are some of the best means, which Ministers can use for promoting the welfare of souls; and it would be happy for the church, if the zeal and care of teachers were chiefly manifested about things of this nature.'‡ This morning seed-time is connected with peculiar encouragement. As has been beautifully observed—'This is perhaps the most delightful of all the Minister's labours. He has indeed ignorance to contend

* Introduction to his Compassionate Counsel to Young Men.

† Orton's Life of Doddridge, ch. v. And again in a letter to a friend—'Oh! could I spend more of my time in *catechizing children*, in exhorting heads of families, and *addressing young people*.' Chap. viii.

‡ Brown's Life and Remains, p. 28. Dr. Owen remarked to the same effect—that 'more knowledge is ordinarily diffused, especially among the young and ignorant by one hour's catechetical exercise, than by many hours' continued discourse.'

with, but ignorance is more easily overcome, than that worse knowledge of "the counsels of the ungodly," which commonly belongs to more advanced years. He has evil to encounter, but it is the evil of nature, not yet rendered obstinate by habit; of vicious propensities, not yet strengthened by indulgence, till the attempt to eradicate is nothing less than the "plucking out a right eye, or the cutting off a right hand."—All reason, all experience, all Scripture, concur in this—"*In the morning* sow thy seed." Often has it sprung up, and brought forth the fruits of grace, when it had seemed to outward eyes to have been choked with tares.'*

With a deep sense of the high responsibility of this Ministry, we proceed to investigate some of its most interesting particulars of detail.

SECTION I.

THE SUNDAY SCHOOL—ITS IMPORTANCE—CONSTITUTION—AND SUPERINTENDENCE.

No difference of opinion can exist on the importance of a Sunday School.† It connects itself with almost every department of the Ministerial system. It is often

* Bishop of Chester's Sermons on the Christian Ministry, pp. 23—26.

† The advantages of Sunday Schools have been strongly set forth in many of our Episcopal Charges. Bishop Law remarked —'There are few means, by which a Minister of our Church can more effectually promote the cause of order and religion. A Sunday School is an easy, cheap, and unmixed good.' (Primary Charge, 1825.) Bishop Blomfield enforced the necessity of a Sunday School '*in every place*—taught, in the failure of other resources, by the clergyman himself, or some part of his family.' Primary Charge at Chester, 1825. It is scarcely necessary to refer to the strong language of recommendation, with which Bishop Porteus addressed his Clergy on this interesting subject.

instrumentally *an adult school.* Parents in not a few instances have been taught to read by their children, thus qualified to instruct them. Suitable application may also be often sent to them from the Sunday School—not to speak of the Scriptural lessons, which, when explained with affectionate and interesting simplicity, will form a part of the child-like conversation in the family circle. And thus we speak extensively through this attractive channel, and with a force of interest, which no other system could convey. In many cases also the palpable happy fruits of Sunday instruction, have brought parents to shame on account of their ignorance, and have excited a sincere and active desire to partake of the advantages. And thus the School enters into almost every family as a medium of instruction. It is indeed the lever, whose force is felt over the whole parish.

On many accounts, therefore, the instruction of the young is of the highest moment; and though, like every other department of the Ministry, it will be the occasion of deeper condemnation in the numerous cases of neglect or misimprovement, yet many are there now on earth, and many more in heaven, who will remember this important advantage in their songs of everlasting praise.*

* Cotton Mather mentions Eliot's prayers, when the question of Ministerial inefficiency was discussed in their synod—'Lord, for schools every where amongst us! that our schools may flourish! that every member of this assembly may go home, and procure a good school in his town! that, before we die, we may be so happy as to see a good school encouraged in every plantation of the country.' The effects of Sunday Schools in the principality of Wales, under the instrumentality of the late Mr. Charles, are among the most remarkable instances of the revival and extension of religion in the present day. See full and most interesting details in *his* life (pp. 237—258.) a most edifying piece of Ministerial biography.

Often also is it the seed-time for the future harvest. As the immediate result, the pulpit Ministry becomes more intelligible and interesting.* In many cases of subsequent reception of the truth, (as in the instance of Timothy,†) the advantages of a previously enlightened mind are sensibly felt; while in less decisive instances, the restraints of instruction operate with wholesome effect. A village with or without a Sunday School, presents to the most casual eye a difference in moral order and quietness. Many respectable servants, apprentices, and even parents, have also been produced by this beneficial influence. And thus in the deficiency of the main success, much is effected for the recipients of instruction of subordinate importance. Nor must it be forgotten, that the teachers in watering others, have often themselves been watered; and have realized in their interesting official engagements, impressions of serious religion hitherto unknown.

The constitution of the school is the course of instruction adapted to the taste and capacities of children—varying from the first rudiments to the highest parts of the system, but ever keeping the main object in view, the intelligent and saving knowledge of the scriptures. No satisfactory advance is made towards this object by the mere repetition even of Scriptural lessons, however well selected and arranged. For if the memories of children be stored with doctrines and precepts, while the intelligent powers remain wholly

* Might it not be well, if the plan, arrangement, and illustrations of our sermons had a more specific reference to the children's apprehension, and to a subsequent inquiry of their intelligence. Not to speak of the advantages to ourselves in the cultivation of a more simple mode of address, the benefit of the children would be most important, in forming and fixing their habit of attention in the house of God, &c.

† 2 Tim. iii. 15.

dormant, no interest can be excited—no permanent impression can be made. In the routine of mechanical instruction, small classes with a competent supply of teachers are preferable. Each teacher might be provided with a bag, containing a copy of the books used in the class, and a card ruled by the superintendent for a quarter of a year—marking on one side the names of the children, with their conduct, attendance, and lessons; and on the other side, the scriptutural and catechetical, and other exercises for the quarter.

It is a too frequent fault in the Sunday School system, that whether from the disproportionate size of the classes—the length or number of the lessons—or the imperfect manner in which they are repeated—little or no time is left for catechetical instruction. The same may be said of time allotted to reading: One or more chapters of the Bible are gone through: Attention is paid to a correct mode of reading; but still, as before, no time is given to explanation. The repetition of the Church Catechism, or a hymn, is after the same mode; either of them may be learned by rote, without one intelligent idea of their contents finding entrance into the mind. Now, whatever be the excellence of this course of instruction, its lack of connexion, arrangement, and explanation, deprives it of interest and profit. More simplicity is needed in the plan—a less variety of books with greater unity of system. Let the lessons *for the elder classes* consist of *some good catechetical exercises* on the Church Catechism, breaking each part into the simplest questions, to which the children should be required to supply the answers—by which means not only their memories (as in the usual course where the answers are subjoined

and learned by rote) are employed, but their minds are exercised, and their own thoughts are elicited. The explanation of difficult words or terms, with Scripture proofs of the doctrines might be added. From the want of this system, probably a small proportion only of those, who have learned the Church Catechism by rote, have attained to any intelligent apprehension of this most admirable formulary of Christian doctrine. —Some *preparatory catechetical exercises* on *some easier catechism* might gradually train the younger classes for an accurate understanding of our own catechism."*

Next.—Let *the lessons consist of Scriptural exercises.* A system of Bible truths might easily be arranged for the elder classes, to which they might be required to bring their own proofs, or the system might be applied in a yet more simple form throughout the school.

Each doctrine or precept, supported by one or more of the more obvious and popular texts, might be written on the back of the teacher's card, as one of the lessons for the quarter, and thus be distributed in every class. Portions of Scripture connected with this lesson might be read by the children, and in part committed to

* This system has been applied to the national catechisms of the Kirk of Scotland, with considerable ingenuity and effect. Initiatory catechisms have been prepared for the younger classes, containing a more simple statement of the truths that are to be found in the established formularies, thus preserving the children's minds from the distraction of a multiplicity of books and catechisms, and at the same time gradually preparing them for ascent into the more intelligent classes. The same principles have been extended also to Scripture exercises with much patient and successful investigation. Some parts of the machinery of this system may be deemed cumbrous, and indeed might easily be dispensed with, but the principles are well deserving the consideration of parochial Ministers. The full developement of these may be seen in an Essay entitled "The End and Essence of Sabbath School Teaching, &c." Gall, Edinburgh; Nisbet, London.

memory for the succeeding Sunday.* Those who cannot read, might have the portion read to them, and be questioned upon it. The mode of oral teaching might here be most usefully applied, a mode, which though it may appear very slow, (the time scarcely allowing of thus learning more than one or two verses on the Sunday,) yet has many advantages of curtailing

* With teachers of piety, judgment, and sufficient cultivation of mind, the following somewhat similar scheme of instruction has been tried. The Minister has fixed upon a course of subjects, (such as the principal histories of the Bible, or the Miracles, Parables, or Life of Christ,) one of which he appoints as the lesson for the ensuing Sunday, sketching out for the teachers in writing the plan which he wishes them to pursue in questioning and explaining the subject in their several classes. The Minister might easily devolve the labour of this plan upon a copyist, to transcribe from his own sketch the teacher's pattern for every class; while the scheme would operate most usefully in preparing the children's minds for his examination, and directing the general course of Scriptural instruction throughout the school. Take as an illustration one of the first and most important events of Scripture—The Fall of Man. Gen. iii. I. As it regards Satan. 1. His object—To show his enmity against God—To make man as miserable as himself. 2. His subtilty in accomplishing his object, 1. Undermining Eve's confidence in God, 1, 3. Appealing to her weakest part—her appetites—her senses, 5, 6. II. As it regards man—The inability even of perfect Adam to keep himself—The gradual effect of the poison, 2, 3,6. Eve tempted becomes the tempter—The instant fruit of shame, 7,—fear—sense of guilt, 8—10.—prevarication—laying the fault upon the other, 12, 13. III. As it regards God—His law broken—his love slighted—his justice called into exercise, 14—19—himself separated from his creatures, 24—his wisdom—contriving a marvellous way of recovery, 15, &c. Learn to dread being left alone in temptation.—Eve was weak—much more are we—Watch against hard thoughts of God's commands or prohibtions. Suspect all that falls in with the lusts of our own hearts. Remember the constant need of self-denial. When you fall into sin, beware of keeping from God as Adam did—of hiding or excusing sin—of throwing the blame upon others. Humble yourself before God—The way to come to God is more plainly revealed than it was to Adam. Implore it for obtaining pardon. See here all the principles of sin in disobedience—rebellion and unbelief. Learn to trace all the sin and misery in your heart, and in the world to this source. Learn to adore the plan that restores and raises the sinner, and glorifies God.

the expensive demands for books, of fixing a habit of attention and impression, and of ensuring perfect lessons. As one advantage of this unity of system, the Minister is enabled to examine the whole school with far greater facility than he could have gone through the examination of the several classes. And this occasional proof of his interest in their charge is most invigorating to the teachers; nor is it less important to the school, as tending to check any rising evils of irregularity or insubordination, and to cement the bond, which ought ever to subsist between the Minister and the lambs of His flock.

It is needless to add, that this immediate contact with the most interesting and important part of his flock, eminently qualifies him for distributing the truth to his people with more discriminating aptitude and effectiveness.

The *Hymns that are learned in* the School should be simple and evangelical—but not too experimental. They form an interesting part of the system, and often fix upon the memory with peculiar power of retention. In order ever to keep in view the book of God as the basis of instruction, the children might be exercised and questioned upon the Hymns, and Scripture proofs required of their main doctrines.*

Yet must this course of exercises always leave room for Scripture, read over several times in small portions.

* The Sunday School Union Hymn Book, and one for the use of St. Jame's School, Leeds may be safely recommended. Every child should learn Watt's Hymns for Children, and be questioned upon them. For the use of such teachers as may need help, a set of Questions and Answers upon these inimitable Hymns, have been published by Westley, London. Miss Taylor's Hymns, though exquisite in their kind, are inferior to Watts's in fulness and simplicity of doctrine, and tone of Scripture language, and on these accounts are less suitable for Sunday Schools.

And this will often be far preferable to larger portions; answering the end of improvement in the letter, and affording the opportunity of comprehending the spirit and application of the lesson by a catechetical examination of its contents. The reading lessons should be selected from the simplest parts of Scripture. The narrative parts of the Gospels might be chosen for the younger classes, and indeed at the commencement for all. Then the new testament might be read through in its course. Not indeed that the Old Testament should be neglected. Yet as the time is too short to allow of a regular progress through that most interesting department, a slight outline might be taught orally, and a portion of school-time well employed in reading at length some circumstance connected with that outline.*

In order carefully to inculcate the most implicit reverence of the sacred book, it will be necessary to guard against undue deviations from the Scriptural form of instruction. Youthful obituaries, however interesting, should be introduced but sparingly even into the unoccupied moments of the school. They often tend to the excitement of a fictitious taste, which indisposes the mind to solid and didactic instruction, and leads it to consider the simple reading of the book of God, rather as a task imposed, than as a privilege bestowed. Narratives of this interesting character and application to youth, will find their more suitable place in a Sunday School Library.

The fearful spread of the poison of infidelity deepens

* It has often been found useful to read some of the most interesting Scripture narratives (such as the history of Joseph) to the class, as a reward for good behaviour, after the routine of lessons and reading by the children has been accomplished.

our views of the importance of grounding the children in scriptural knowledge—thus providing them, as far in us lies, "with the armour of righteousness on the right hand and on the left." We should not *willingly* allow a child to leave our schools, without some general idea at least of the Divine authority of the Bible, and without the testimony of conscience as to the pains, with which we endeavoured to instruct him in the grand fundamentals of the Christian system.*

But the improvement of the school mainly depends upon the *efficiency of its superintendence.* The direction of the mechanism, the system of instruction, and the choice of teachers, should, as far as possible, be under the superintendence of the Ministry. The selection and control of the teachers requires much prayer and consideration. They should be marked by readiness and intelligence, general good conduct, and, *if possible*, by Christian humility and love, their lives exhibiting the pattern of their instructions. The discretion allowed to them must vary according to their qualifications. Considerable licence may be given to piety, education, judgment, and experience. But piety with an unfurnished or undisciplined mind, or steadiness and good intention without Christian princi-

* Nothing is more important in the Sunday School system, than a clear and interesting view of Christian doctrine. Perhaps the miracles illustrated by doctrinal proofs, might be an application of the well-known and effective plan of teaching the young by pictures. Instance the leper, Matt. viii. 1—4. I. His leprosy—a picture of sin. Compare Num. xi. 44—46. with Ps. li. 2, 7. Is. vi. 5. II. His application to Christ—an illustration of faith, in his sense of need and dependence on Christ. Matt. xi. 28. John vii. 37. III. His healing—a representation of the power of faith. Is. lxi. 1. John vi. 37. Heb. vii. 25. Some of the most obvious types, (as the brazen serpent, Num. xxi. 6—9. with John iii. 14, 15.) might admit of the same simple and interesting mode of doctrinal illustration upon the most sober principles of Scriptural Interpretation.

ple, require more immediate and minute control. Under all circumstances however it is desirable, that the real power should be vested in the superintendent, by whom the mechanism of instruction should be directed, and under whom all should act upon the principle of a regular system.*

The best system, however, will be materially impeded by inefficiency in the instrumental agents. To teach the teachers is often the most effectual way of assisting the operations of the school. Want of habit and intelligence often prevents them from seeing our plans in a strong light, so that they either shrink from a hearty concurrence with us, or they are awakened in their attempts to co-operate. They must not therefore be left under these circumstances to their own resources. Books must be supplied to them, and the quantity to be learnt or read restricted. They must be urged to take pains with themselves at home, in the remembrance, that simplicity of expression and explanation is no very easy attainment, and that a mechanical system, conducted without intelligence, is utterly inefficient. They must be instructed to change the monotonous tone of gravity and continued exhortation, productive only of repulsive listlessness, for the catechetical mode of address, as decidedly the most effective to maintain attention, convey information, and elicit intelligence.†

* On all subjects connected with the mechanism of Sunday Schools, see Hints published by the Irish Sunday School Society. On the department of teachers, James's Sunday Teacher's Guide, and Lloyd's Sunday Teacher's Manual may be consulted with advantage.

† The following works will furnish most valuable information and assistance to the teacher—'Help to the Study of the Gospels,' Gall, Edinburgh, Nisbet, London—'Fuller's (of Bristol) Child's Examiner'—'Judson's (of America) Scripture Questions,' published by the *Religious Tract Society*—The Bible Teacher's Manual

They must be made acquainted with the difficulties of the work—as "a work of faith, and labour of love" —with its privileges, as "fellow-workers with" God— with its responsibilities, as having the soul of each child committed to their trust, and with its requisite qualifications, of steadiness, perseverance, kindness, meekness, patience, and faith. Instruction of this kind is of the highest consideration to them, as leading them to have their work habitually before them (instead of conceiving it to be finished with the school hours), remembering, that the children may learn from their spirit and conduct, when their Sabbath employment is little in their thoughts. In this spirit also individual anxiety for the spiritual welfare of their charge is gradually substituted in the room of delusive satisfaction in their general attention and progress. Prayer is quickened, faith is exercised, "patience has her perfect work"— and in the midst of discouragements, and in the want of outward tokens of success, they continue "stedfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as they know that their labour *is not in vain in the Lord.*"*

We must however more particularly observe upon the subject of teachers, that where, as it often happens, they are selected from the elder class, or from young persons who have left the school, a class of teachers is an important movement of the machine. We must not rely upon the instruction, which they have previously received in the school; they must be practised in the best modes of suiting the taste of children, com-

(Holdsworth).. Bible Exercises, and Teacher's Questioning Book on the New Testament for the use of the Royal Military Asylum, By Rev. G. Clarke.

* 1 Cor. xv. 58.

manding their attention, gaining their confidence, and drawing out their measure of natural capacity and information. It would be well to lend them books for their own improvement, (such as those mentioned in the preceding note,) and from time to time to take them under our personal inspection, endeavouring to direct the turn of their mind to the most efficient exercises for their important work. In general we may remark, that young teachers are far preferable to old, as being more easily instructed and managed, and having that full spring and elasticity, which acts promptly on the varying exigencies of the moment, and enlivens the course of serious instruction with cheerfulness and interest. Their general conduct must, however, be a subject of especial pastoral vigilance; and counsel, caution, encouragement, or reproof, grounded upon their voluntary obligations, will often be of the highest moment.

A monthly or quarterly meeting of the teachers is one of the most important parts of the Sunday School system.* As a matter of mechanical arrangement, we are thus enabled to ascertain the progress of the school, to investigate the hindrances to its advancement, and

* The obvious form of conducting it appears to be, commencing with prayer; then proceeding to the business of the school, by examination of each teacher's card, raising the children to higher classes, discussing their conduct, making such alterations in the classes, or in the rules of the school, as may be requisite, in which each teacher is considered to have a voice, throwing out suggestions or hints, as they may occur, mentioning new books, that may be wanted, general inquiries as to the progress of the children in reading, learning, intelligence, steadiness, or seriousness of deportment. After the routine of business is finished, endeavour to promote general conversation upon the importance of religious instruction, or particular points of detail. Then finish with exposition and prayer. Where the teachers are of nearly equal rank with ourselves, it is desirable to make it a social meeting of kindly Christian intercourse.

suggest means for their removal, to recommend the adoption of new plans, or encourage perseverance in the old frame work. By comparing each other's notes, many profitable questions are started, and many improving discoveries are made. We mark, where we have failed, in prayer, faith, perseverance, or interest. We remark also what parts of our system have succeeded; and this discovery brings with it fresh energy and encouragement under more humbling recollections. These meetings are also most important in the opportunity of uniting the teachers in their work, strengthening the influence of Evangelical motives, awakening a spirit of mutual inspection and provocation,* and uniting in special prayer for increasing energy, faith, and patience in the work, and a larger effusion of Divine influence upon it.

The system of rewards and punishments requires judicious regulation. Rewards might be distributed monthly in small books,† or annually in books of greater value, or in useful articles of clothing. We should however be careful, that the principles of excitement in the way of reward should encourage real rather than comparative excellence. Emulation, awakened by competition, is the principle of selfishness, and therefore should be as far, and as soon as possible, repressed. As to punishment, the teachers should never be permitted to strike the children, nor the master to use any corporal correction, except by the express appointment of the superintendant. In most cases it is desirable to resign the child over to the parents for the exercise of needful discipline. Confinement beyond

* Heb. x. 24, 25.

† Such as the Friendly Visitor, Children's Friend, or the Monthly Publications of the Religious Tract Society.

the hours of school is usually found most efficient correction. Yet is it most important never to use restraint until milder means have been tried in vain, and to exhibit our whole system as prominently characterized rather by rewards than by punishments. Children are much more powerfully influenced by encouragement than by repulsion. Where practicable, a Sunday School Library might be connected with the general system of rewards, as a useful stimulous to improvement and enriching the mind with a valuable store of Christian principles.* The various demands upon the Minister's time and strength do not always admit of his conducting personally the superintendance of the Sunday School. It is however desirable that he should open or close the school, or both with some short exercise, and singing, and prayer. It is then that he appears in one of his most difficult, yet most interesting characters, as "a teacher of babes," child-like in the treatment of children. Upon the whole, it is expedient to diversify the details of instruction, so far as *is consistent with the unity of the system*—'to drop the truth into narrow-mouthed understandings, and thereupon to graft exhortations, which may draw the catechumens into declared resolutions of piety;' which 'is one of the things, where an abundance of wisdom and prudence may be demonstrated.'†

But if the mechanism of a Sunday School—however admirably regulated by Ministerial control, and however amply provided with the means of religious

* This library might be readily furnished from the Publications of the Religious Tract Society, and from the Youth's and Nursery Library in Bickersteth's Christian Student, a work which needs not the Writer's recommendation, as of the highest value and adaptation for ministerial and general usefulness.

† Mather's Student and Pastor, pp. 197, 198.

instruction—forms the quantum of supply for the spiritual wants of the young, it will only furnish confirmatory evidence of the comparative inefficacy of a *mere Sabbath ministration.* For can we forget, how much that is learned at school is unlearned at home—either from the habits of "childhood and youth," which, by an infallible judgment, are pronounced to be "vanity;"* or as weakened by the neglect, or contradicted by the example, of those who ought to be their instructors? Can we suppose, humanly speaking, that one day's struggle against the stream will be able to overcome the bad habits of the other six, falling in, as they do, with the natural bias of the heart? Sabbath instruction must therefore as far as possible be carried into the parochial Ministry. If local circumstances do not admit of an organized system, the children must be followed home with inquiries concerning the influence of the school upon their general conduct—upon their habits of subjection, seriousness, industry and truth; inculcating an affectionate and judicious application of Christian discipline, as the basis of the domestic economy. Nothing however is of higher moment, than to aim at drawing the children into connexion with us during the week. Wherever it can be accomplished, the teachers should be urged to assemble their classes in the week; or the Minister or his wife should endeavour to collect them. Habits of daily intercourse with them, familiar instruction in private, combined with a general readiness to unbend towards them, so that they might look upon us in the light of parents or friends, all this will materially assist to open the avenues of confidence—that most successful medium of ap-

* Eccles. xi. 10.

proach to the heart. Encouragement to persevere in these exercises will not be wanted, though their energy, and effectiveness, is liable to much interruption from parochial hindrances.

The elder children also, who either have left, or are about to leave, the school, furnish a most anxious Ministration. Their age is usually the most important and critical in their lives.* If no power of restraint or conviction has been produced, it is too frequently the era of their complete declension in conduct. The restrictions of the school are removed—they become disencumbered of an irksome yoke—they join light and trifling companions—and we have the grief of finding, that their course of instruction, instead of becoming a blessing, has proved the awful means of hardening them in sin. Two remedies suggest themselves to prevent this melancholy issue. First—that our plan of instruction in the school should be calculated to interest their minds, and our treatment of them such as will engage their confidence. The catechetical and explanatory mode seems most suited to produce the first of these effects—the other must depend upon the character, feelings, and conduct of the teachers, who, if they love the children, will generally be more or less successful in engaging their love for them. Next—

* It has been found important to fix the period of the children's leaving the school; at the same time giving full permission to remain after that time. This operates as a restraint and encouragement upon the better children, and secures a decent dismissal to those who would shortly, by breaking the yoke, separate themselves wholly from all kindly communication with us. The friends of education at Glasgow a few years since formed an association, called 'The Glasgow young men's society for religious improvement'—the grand object of which was to keep up the remembrance of the religious truths which had been inculcated upon them, by meeting at stated seasons for mutual encouragement and support.

that we provide some means of continuing our connexion, after they have left the school. In some instances they might be engaged as teachers under our vigilant superintendance. This need not however prevent their continuing with us as learners, if we can prevail upon them to attend upon our instructions. Some separate time might be devoted to them, either on the Sunday evening, or some convenient weekly opportunity. The lesson system should of course be relinquished, except the wish of the young people should suggest it. Nothing compulsory should be attempted. They might be led to consider portions of Scripture, and required to find parallel proofs or illustrations. Sometimes the principal events in a book of Scripture might form an exercise—or the doctrines, precepts, and promises contained within a certain compass of Scripture, comparing prophecy with its fulfilment, or proving the Catechism, Articles, or other formularies of our church, by Scripture; always taking care, that the exercises are such as set their own minds to work, and habituate them to their own modes of thinking. Intercourse with them should be encouraged in every possible way, by employing them at our houses, interesting ourselves about their temporal concerns, lending them interesting and useful books, endeavouring to place them in respectable and serious families, making inquiries respecting them of their masters, inviting them to come to us in their periodical visits to their friends from service, and in every way maintaining affectionate sympathy and communication with them. Some of these ways may appear almost too minute and trifling for suggestion; but in practical experience they are found to be influential in the accomplishment of the most important ends.

SECTION II.

INFANT'S SCHOOLS.

THE Infant School system under the *regulation of Christian discipline and instruction*, may be considered as one of the most valuable and successful experiments on the theory of Education. The endeavour to bend the twig some years sooner than it was used to be bent, has gained a considerable advantage over the dominion of darkness and error; an advantage however, which will turn against us, except the early excitement of intelligence is controled and directed to the only right and Christian end—'The first seven years,' as has been accurately observed, 'are the seed-time of life;'* only the two or three last years of which had hitherto been cultivated, while the earlier years had been lost to the child and to the world.

The importance of the Infant School system is beginning to be universally acknowledged. Yet it may be well to enumerate some of its specific advantages, and to glance at some general principles on which it should be conducted. The *advantage of an Infant School as a part of the Parochial Ministry* is considerable. It is a nursery for the Sunday and Weekly Schools. Children taken from their own families cost much time and pains to restrain their undisciplined habits. But when the Infant School training is their door of entrance, some habits of order and attention have commenced. The drudgery of the alphabet also is in some degree passed through, which (in the Sunday

* Manual for instruction of Infant Schools, by the Rev. W. Wilson, Walthamstow, p. 149.

School especially) interposes a grievous hindrance to the immediate operation of the higher designs of instruction. *The advantages to parents* (*particularly to mothers*) are of no small value, giving them time, quiet, ability to earn, with the comfort of knowing that their children are safely and kindly provided for. This indeed has been sometimes urged as an objection, that it makes them negligent of their charge, and that it separates the children from their natural guardians. This might be plausible, if most mothers exercised a Christian or parental discipline over their children. But acquaintance with the habits of the poor, proves that their children are generally unrestrained, till the age of five or six; even in many cases, where their mothers are able to attend to them. And those that have marked the influence of schools in the families of the poor have uniformly found, that the habits acquired at school have bound the children to their parents by the early subordination, improvement, and cheerfulness of their tempers, the want of which is so fruitful a source of discord. And thus *the advantage to the children* is equally great. *Negatively*, in their deliverance from from filth, bad company, and mischief; and *positively*, in cleanliness, order, obedience, attraction to what is useful, formation of good habits, corrective of bad tempers, real learning, storing the mind with the elements of Scripture, early impressions of religion, &c. &c.

As to the manner of conducting Infant Schools, let it be (in country parishes especially) with as much simplicity, and as little excitement as possible. Great injury must be apprehended from bringing the children forward into notice. Show and expense are equally to be avoided. Let there be as little as possible taught that is useless. Amusement and play even in instruction is

needful for infants, but it *may be carried too far.* 'The idea of teaching every thing as play or entertainment,' as has been well remarked, even if the project could be accomplished, 'would sacrifice the great moral benefits of education. For what interesting tract of information could compensate for the loss of the important habits of application? The main object of the school (to which every other must be subordinate) is not to amuse but to instruct; to be instrumental in giving such a bias as may direct the mind to the word of God as the standard of right and wrong, and as the light to guide to the knowledge of ourselves, of our present happiness, and of our eternal hopes. This design will admit of much variety of detail in the course of instruction, such as objects, pictures, conversation, narrative, reading, &c.—in each department the Scriptures open an abundant field for improvement in the most diversified forms.' Nor is it at all correct to conclude, that the elementary principles of religion are beyond the intelligence of a child. For not to speak of their perfect simplicity, the light and dictates of conscience materially assist the comprehension.

In country parishes some of the children come or remain older at the school, than in large towns, where other weekly schools are ready to receive them. In this case (and indeed in all cases, as soon as the children are capable of it) let them be usefully employed. Knitting and platting would furnish work for boys, and sewing for girls. Much of Scripture stories or Scriptural knowledge may be taught orally in the midst of these occupations.

In many respects several small schools are preferable to one large one. There is less display and excitement. Yet the difficulty of obtaining efficient superintend-

ence usually presents a formidable hindrance to this plan. It is obvious how much depends upon this point—more perhaps than in any other school. True piety seems to be an indispensable requisite in the master or mistress. Combined with this, "aptness to teach," decided fondness for children, quickness in marking their character and habits, and in gaining their affections, condescension to their amusements, good health, active habits, patience, kindness, correcting without passion, in the mildest mode, to effect the desired end, in the general system ruling by love not by fear. The kindness however of management must be moderated by discipline, or it will tend rather to foster a softness of character than a solid and strengthened habit of mind.

Where no facility offers for a regular Infant School from want of funds, room, co-operation, or other causes, much may be done by improving the Dame Schools already in existence. A little time given weekly to them, occasional supply of books, suggestions of improvement in their plan of instruction, some trifling addition made to the income of the mistress by sending a few children to the school; these trifling attempts might secure considerable influence, and be productive of much good. In all cases it is desirable that the children should make some payment, however trifling.

In general however we observe, that Christian instruction and discipline must be the governing principles of the system of Infant education, else it may be viewed as a scheme of doubtful expediency, uncertain prospect of usefulness, or even of probable and over-balancing evil.*

* It is almost needless to refer to Rev. W. Wilson's admirable developement of the whole machinery in his 'System of Infant

SECTION III.

WEEKLY SCHOOLS.

On the subject of Weekly Schools, more than any other system, local circumstances prevent any thing more than general principles being laid down. The detail therefore must be formed by a judicious consideration of these circumstances. Much that is simple and easy in practice does not admit of description, and experience alone can effectually determine their expediency. The National system of instruction is becoming more universal, and needs not be particularized. Many subsidiary and not unimportant suggestions might, however, be added to it (the result of experiments upon the priaciples of education) for more local adaptation; in establishing or re-modelling a Weekly School, it will be highly desirable to improve all the helps that are afforded, and to inspect some of the admirable establishments where different experiments are in actual progress and efficiency. The design of the Weekly School is to provide instruction for every child in the parish, though it is too often found, that blessings freely offered are unduly slighted. In Village Schools, the variety of ages, and the great difficulty of ensuring regular attendance, is more sensibly felt than in towns. Indeed it is in many cases scarcely just or expedient to enforce it, as the absence

Schools,' and 'Manual of Instruction for Infant Schools.' Should the expensiveness of some of his plans be objected to, (where the strictest economy was required,) yet so many valuable hints may be gathered from his works, that the Writer cannot forbear most strongly to recommend them.

of the children is chiefly occasioned by their early training to agricultural work; the earnings of which are a necessary component part of their livelihood. Yet as the licence is often abused by indolence, either on the part of the children or parents, the inducement of some trifling reward to regular attendance at the end of the quarter, would prove a useful distinction between necessary and unnecesary absence. The payment of a penny (more or less) by the children connected with this system of rewards, would contribute to ensure regularity, while, as a part of the general system, it gives the School a value in the eyes of those whom it is intended to embrace. How much depends upon the superintendence of the establishment is obvious to all. Undoubted piety, firmness, judgment, regularity, alacrity, strict probity, and real love for the employment, are requisites, which every Minister would desire to see combined in the Master or Mistress of the Weekly School. They should gain the respect, in order to secure the obedience of the children. At the same time, it does not seem desirable, that they should be vested with much discretionary power. The parents are better satisfied, when they are bound by a regular course marked out for them by authority. Wherever visitors can be found, concurring with the rules of the School, and maintaining the regularity of all its minute arrangements, it is well to avail ourselves of their kind assistance. Rewards are very important, when judiciously applied. Their value is of little comparative moment. The main point is, that they should be distributed with the strictest justice, so that the children may be assured that they will be connected proportionably with their conduct and exertion. In punishments, certainty is far more to be considered than

severity. In general, disgrace or forfeiture of reward, will supply the place of corporal punishment, which at least ought not to be resorted to, until milder measures have been ineffectually tried. In the circulating classes, (a method first adopted in the Islington Schools,) the circles gained by the children may be of a given value, and be periodically redeemed for books, or clothes, or other articles of reward—accurate registers being kept of the progress and conduct of the children. This invention seems to have remedied the imperfection felt in schools conducted upon the general system. It possesses the high advantage—that the emulation excited is not personal. The child's attention is not engaged in taking the place of another, but only in securing a place for himself. Each may exert himself to the utmost, and be rewarded accordingly. Eight or ten in the same class may receive the same reward, and in every respect be considered equal. On the former plan, the children were taught to consider the top place in the class as the highest station of honorary distinction, and the last place as the lowest point of degradation. But on this system, all places, considered *as places*, are alike honourable, and the movement is unlimited according to merit. The child is perpetually rising or retrograding. If attentive, he finds an unceasing motive to exertion and diligence, while even the dull are enlivened, in not standing at the bottom of the class in hopeless despondency.*

It is very necessary for the keeping up the interest of the children, that their occupations should be varied, perhaps almost every half hour; taking care,

* For a full description, see a small work published by John Stoat, Master of the Islington Parochial School. Rivingtons.

however, that the order of their employment should on no account be dispensed with. Equally necessary it is, that they should be made to understand every thing which they learn to read. Plans should be adopted to insure a system of minute questioning on all their lessons, under the vigilant superintendence of the Minister or some delegated and competent inspector. The religious instruction however, constitutes the main power of the system, and without which even under the most orderly regulations, it is a lifeless mechanism. It is to be feared, that much that is called religious instruction but little answers to the name. This is far too important to be left to the Master. He may be competent for the official arrangements, and yet either from utter ignorance of religion, or want of spiritual apprehensions, he may be wholly incapacitated for this most important course of instruction. To make it the employment of the first hour may serve to impress the children's minds with a sense of its pre-eminent importance; and Catechism, Scripture, or Hymns, may be learnt by word of mouth from the teacher, before the other books are distributed, and this plan (where it can be adopted) might tend to spread an atmosphere over the whole subsequent course. So powerful a machinery as schools, require in every part the control of the principles of the Gospel to render them efficient to the desired ends.

SECTION IV.

THE TREATMENT OF THE YOUNG IN A HOPEFUL STATE OF IMPRESSION.

With the exception of special cases in the Visitation of the Sick, this may be considered as the most

difficult part of the Pastoral office. No peculiar talent, originality, or Ministerial fluency, is requisite; but the "spirit of power and of love," combined with "the spirit of a sound mind."* These youthful recipients of instruction are readily melted by the power of affectionate address; while too often their conduct proves their consciences to be unawakened, and their hearts unimpressed. Their very susceptibility of religious impressions has a strong influence in fostering self-deception, in leading them to mistake mere natural impulse for the exercise of the spiritual life, conviction of sin for conversion of heart, feeling for principle, attachment to their Minister for love to their Saviour, interest in the mechanical form of instruction for interest in the Gospel. Much caution is also required, in placing Christian experience before them, for the purpose of conviction, lest almost unconsciously, we form their character either to hypocrisy or self-deception; much close personal application of the Gospel to their several cases; a distinct separation between natural and spiritual excitement; and a watchfulness against the subtle influence of all excitement, that does not distinctly act upon the conscience. Even the exhibition of the love of Christ should be set forth in its glory and sublimity, as well as in its inexpressible tenderness and endearment; that, while the wax is warmed and softened by the lively glow of feeling, a deep, complete, and permanent impression may be made, and the judgment, conscience, and habits may be powerfully influenced.

Not that we would deprecate that legitimate excitement, which may often, under God, awaken the exercise

* 2 Tim. i. 7.

of gracious affections, producing, in their turn, a most important reaction. But it may move without *moulding* the heart. It may be only the effect of sympathy, wrought upon by an affectionate earnestness of address, or, (as in the history of Joseph, or the sufferings of Christ,) by the touching simplicity and tenderness of Divine truths, without any spiritual principle, perception, or practical influence. There may even be considerable influence upon the mind, conscience, and conversation, without the radical change of heart. The will—the sovereign power in the soul—though disturbed and restrained by the light of the mind and the working of the conscience, may still show its natural bias to sin. There may also be a work of illumination without spiritual light, complacency, rest, or transformation.* The conscience may be awakened by natural conviction to a greater quickness and sensibility, without that penitent abhorrence of sin, that turns to the blood of Christ, that it might be "purged from dead works to serve the living God."† The affections may be also touched, yet not fixed, nor filled with the things of God. The impression therefore is transient and uninfluential.‡ The love of the world is not wholly thrust out, nor is its place filled with spiritual love and delight; so that, though "the house is swept and garnished" with much outward reformation, it is "empty" of Christ, and not inlaid with saving grace, and therefore ready for the reentrance of Satan with more established power.§ Spiritual dispositions as well as external duties, may be

* See Heb. vi. 4, 5, † Ibid. ix. 14.
‡ Hosea vi. 4. Matt. xiii. 20, 21.
§ Matt. xii. 43—45. This is especially the case with the unconverted children of Christian parents.

fearfully counterfeited;* and therefore their evidences must be carefully sifted, and tried much more by consistent conduct, than by the most intelligent and blameless profession. Even under decided symptoms of sincerity, watchfulness is most necessary to encourage a solid rather than a rapid progress. It is well even to *seem* to keep youthful converts back, rather than by an indiscreet confidence to hazard a hasty and doubtful profession. Let us indeed appear before them as the happy heralds of the Gospel. We have received a special commission respecting them, grounded upon the most endearing motives.† We have messages to them of peculiar encouragement, and of generous and munificent love, sufficient to warrant the largest anticipation of lasting happiness.‡ Yet still must we discourage confidence in a new excitement of interest and delight, irrespective of a serious, lowly, and Christian walk, and unaccompanied with an experimental acquaintance with themselves and their besetting temptations. Nor do we doubt, but that sincerity, instead of being cast down by this *apparent* (for it is only apparent) discouragement, will eventually be strengthened in a more self-suspecting scrutiny. The prevailing defect in the religion of young persons appears to be, that their views of the Saviour are too slightly connected with this self-inquiry, and therefore too feebly influential in deepening their humility, expanding their love, and promoting their Christian stedfastness and consistency. This retarding system therefore, (so to call it,) will be of much service in separating the chaff from the wheat; disappointing a

* Such as repentance, 1 Kings xxi. 27—29. Faith, Luke viii. 13. Acts viii. 13. Joy, Matt. xiii. 20. John v. 35.

† John xxi. 15. ‡ Such as Prov. viii. 17. Jer. iii. 4.

forward profession of its expected encouragement, whilst the germ of trembling sincerity is secretly cherished and preserved. Young trees, even of "the Lord's planting," require diligent care and watering: but by any attempt to force the fruit, the principle of life in the root may be materially injured. Indeed they cannot be *accurately distinguished* until their budding and blossom have matured into fruit. Many a hard frost nips the bud—many an eastern blast threatens the blossom; and therefore the result of winter and spring can alone determine the life of the incorruptible seed in the root.

SECTION V.

YOUNG MEN.

THE breaking in of "the wild asses' colt," demands extreme management, and not a little patience. The trite French proverb aptly applies to this case—'A drop of honey will catch more flies than a pint of vinegar.' All means—change of means—every effort, must be tried in succession, to discover what treatment is most likely to produce effect. Kind and substantial expressions of interest in their employments—accessibility of manners and address—the improvement of apparently accidental opportunities of intercourse—the use of books adapted as far as possible to their situation, and with a cast of seriousness more or less deepened according to circumstances;—friendly advice upon their temporal concerns chiefly offered in the way of suggestion, and with a careful guard against meddling interference;—these and other plans naturally arising out of our knowledge of their dispositions, and suited to their local habits, may possibly effect some good. And let it be

remembered, that something must be done, or at least attempted, for them. They are in some respects the most important part of our flock, and in their day will form the great body of influence among us. While those who are brought under the power of the Gospel are our most powerful supports, those who are neither restrained by education, attachment, personal respect, or religious principle, generally become (the Writer speaks from experience) the very pests of the parish. They have sometimes, by peculiar tact, prudence, and decision, been brought under a distinct course of instruction ;* but in general their pride and self-will makes even the most affectionate control intolerable, and often produces the most violent reaction. Our aim must be to preserve others (and especially the elder lads of our Sunday Schools) from their injurious

* A plan of engaging the interest of elder lads and young men, on the Sunday evenings, was tried in a large sphere with considerable success. No limitation of age was made—all who could read well were invited. The classes were divided with as much regard as possibl to age, the Minister himself taking the first and largest class. About an hour was spent in repeating a portion of Scripture, which had been selected on the preceding Sunday, and which the teachers explained in the several classes, illustrating it by comparison with other Scriptures, and requiring the lads to bring their own parallels, as a proof of their diligent study and interest. No compulsion however was used. The lessons were set before them as subjects of interest rather than as task and duty. In the next division of time, the whole school was arranged before the Minister, who questioned, explained, and applied the subject which had been set before them in their classes; requiring an answer on Scripture proof, sometimes from a lad, sometimes from a class, sometimes from the whole school. A short sketch of Christian biography, or serious address was then read, (unless, which was sometimes the case, the interest of the catechetical subject employed the whole time,) the subject for the ensuing Sunday was given out, and singing and prayer ended the evening. The attendance of the lads was regular and voluntary. A bond of union was cemented with their Minister and with each other. The power of restraint was extensively felt; and in many cases a Divine influence was manifested, with permanent and practical effect.

society or example. And here we may perhaps avail ourselves of their popular plans to subserve the purposes of a distinct Ministry to them. A way is sometimes opened for obtaining, if not an ascendency, at least an important influence of restraint and confidence in their Benefit Societies. Or we might organize a Society mainly upon their own principles under our immediate superintendence. The public fund enriched with the ale-house money, would afford higher pecuniary advantage at the same ratio of payment. And this attraction, held out to the considerate, would enable us to introduce rules of a different standard to similar institutions, and to enforce decided regard to moral obligations, upon pain of severe penalties.* The line of demarcation would thus be drawn between the steady and the irregular; and, though with some of the more fearful it may cause a shyness to join a society bearing a peculiar stamp of reproach, yet even in its slow progress towards general acceptance, it will be attended with considerable indirect advantages. It may be made an interesting organ of Ministerial instruction, by the improvement of the monthly meetings for reading the Scriptures and for prayer: or by such a regulation as directs each member in his attendance to bring his contribution of a text of Scripture, which with the rest, might be recapitulated at the close of the business with personal application. Such an attempt to engraft, without formality, spiritual intercourse upon friendly advice, will be found by no means barren in profit or interest.†

* Friendly Societies on Mr. Becher's system are well known. Interesting details of similar Societies, grounded upon different, though, it is presumed, not insecure principles, may be seen in Richmond's Life, pp. 116—130.

† For an interesting plan of 'young men associated' upon religious principles, see Cotton Mather's Essays to do Good, pp. 92—96. and Dr. Woodward's account of the rise and progress

This Ministry is however marked with peculiar discouragement. At the best we often feel that we have their respect, not their confidence. In other instances, we are almost ready to feel, that the means used, only increase the evil; and that it is better for both parties, that we should maintain a degree of reserve and distance, labouring with more intensity to spread their case before the Lord. Yet under the most trying circumstances this Ministry should bear the stamp of peculiar tenderness—the "nursing-mother cherishing her children."* We must guard against a feeling of our own spirit, when they turn their backs upon our repeated admonitions.† We must "rebuke them sharply," yet instruct them in meekness, while the "peradventure, that God will give them repentance,"‡ should shut out despondency. Nor must we readily desist from this Ministry. Successive disappointments must exercise faith, deepen humiliation, quicken our prayers, increase our anxieties—not induce a sullen, indolent heartlessness. There is a solemn cause pending between us and God on their account, before we can venture to cast them off, as "the dogs and the swine," who stand excluded from our commission.§ It is indeed most humbling to feel how little is done; but our rule must be—'Sow in faith, and have long patience; wait on and for the Lord.' Fruit will be found under the most discouraging appearances, but

of Religious Societies, chap. ii. iii. One of the excellent rules in the Societies thus memorialized by Dr. Woodward was, that each member should endeavour to bring at least one other into their Christian fellowship,—a resolution which, in many instances, was honoured with the Divine blessing.

* 1 Thess. ii. 7.

† 'Quicquid lacerato animo dixeris, punientis est impetus, non charitas corrigentis.' August. in Gal. vi.

‡ Tit. i. 13. with 2 Tim. ii. 25. § See Matt. vii. 6.

we must expect to wait for it. The "patience of hope" is the preparation for the "assurance of hope." "Through faith and patience we shall inherit the promise."

Another point of great moment in this department of our Ministry, regards our watchfulness over those connexions, which young persons with a religious profession sometimes incautiously form. The power to throw in a word of seasonable warning, before the die is cast, on which perhaps depends eternity, is among the many advantages of confidential intercourse. The havoc which Satan has ever made in the church, through such fatal unions, is beyond all calculation. How many hopeful blossoms have been withered! How many apparently promising converts, thus sifted, have proved but chaff! How many sincere, but hesitating, Christians have been shaken by *the infatuated* attempt to unite "the temple of God with idols!" And yet to choose the moment, and to discover the safe extent, of interference; and for this purpose to combine the influence of confidence, and the knowledge of character and circumstances acquired from that source, demands extreme delicacy, tenderness, and prudence. Indeed there is no department of the pastoral Ministry of the young, which requires more anxious consideration, than the developement of the sophistries and self-indulgent delusions, which arise out of their temptations, and the application of the severest touch-stone of the Gospel requisitions, to animate or restore the spiritual system. Those instances in which the wise counsels of a faithful Pastor are blessed in such a crisis, he will reckon among the most prominent tokens of God's gracious help; and in cases

of failure, he may still reap no small advantage to himself in a deeper insight into the devices of Satan and the self-deceit of the human heart.

SECTION VI.

PRACTICAL SUGGESTIONS ON CONFIRMATION.*

THIS subject is a most important part of the Ministry of the young, and one that brings with it peculiar encouragements, anxieties, and responsibilities. Never, perhaps, are the affectionate yearnings of the faithful Pastor more drawn out towards his beloved flock, than at the season of Confirmation. Then, if ever, he is prepared to meet them with the Apostle's expression of parental interest—"My little children, of whom I travail in birth again, until Christ be formed in you."† The rite of Confirmation, if not of express Apostolical origin, was at least derived from Apostolical practice. We cannot indeed identify it with that imposition of hands,‡ which appears to to have been followed invariably with miraculous influence; but the concurrent testimonies of the earliest fathers and councils afford strong presumptive evidence that it was the continuance of the same rite, as an ordinary means of spiritual edification, for a purpose and objects somewhat varied from its original institution.§ Calvin admits it to have

* The substance of this section appeared in the Christian Observer, February and March of this year. (1829.)

† Gal. iv. 19. ‡ Acts viii. 17. xix. 6.

§ The authorities may be seen in Wheatley and Comber. The chief of them are referred to by the Rev. B. Woodd and the Rev. D. Wilson, in their valuable tracts on the subject. Comp. Bishop Hall's Polem. Works, vol. iv. and an excellent treatise lately published by the Rev. T. H. Kingdon. Dr. Hammond's View of the

been the custom of the ancient church, and wishes that it had been preserved in its simplicity in his own church, before the Papal heresy unduly exalted it into a sacrament.* The ancient church of the Waldenses retained the substance of it as an Apostolical institution.† The most eminent lights of the Reformed Churches (Peter Martyr, Rivet, Peter des Moulin, &c.) give it the weight of their authority. The Bohemian and Lutheran Churches allow the ordinance; which indeed is (as Archbishop Secker has observed) 'of such acknowledged usefulness, that in the times of confusion, when Bishops were rejected, some of their adversaries took upon them to perform this part of their function, and within these few years (1741) the Church of Geneva hath restored it in the best manner their form of church government will admit, and added an office for it to their Liturgy.'‡

Directory, and Calvin's Institutes, (referred to in Christian Observer, 1829, pp. 71, 72, 143, 144,) will give some important views upon the subject, from very opposite schools of divinity. A scarce, but satisfactory, treatise, by Jonathan Hanmer (1658), besides referring to the ancient authorities, gives the approving judgment of Baxter, Calamy, Venning, and others of the Puritan Divines, on Confirmation. Archbishop Leighton strongly recommended to his clergy the substance of the rite of Confirmation, though the turbulent spirit of his times did not allow him to introduce the ceremony Works, ii. 450. It is difficult to conjecture any reasonable objection to the rite of imposition of hands—consecrated as it is by the frequent usage of the Old Testament Church, by the example of our Lord, and, as Calvin remarks—'the ordinary rite among the Jews, in commending any one to the blessing of God.' Calv. in Acts. xiii. 3.

* Calv. Instit. lib. iv. c. xix. 4, 13, and on Heb. vi. 2; which text he conceives fully sufficient to prove the Apostolical origin of the present institution. Chrysostom expounds the passage to the same purport.

† See their Confessions and Apologies, quoted in Hanmer's Exercitation. pp. 37—40.

‡ Secker's Charges, p. 52. The professors of Theology at Leyden, having with Calvin expressed their wishes for its restoration in the Church, add—'*Cujus substantiæ in Ecclesiis nostris religiose servatur.*'—Synopsis Purioris Theologiæ, Lugd. 1625. Disput. xlvii.

The intent of this rite is sufficiently obvious, as the complement and seal of infant baptism. In that ordinance the profession of the child's faith, requisite for the act of covenanting with God, had been made by a surety. In laying claim therefore to the personal benefit of the Christian covenant, there must be a credible personal profession of the terms of that covenant. The parent's or sponsor's profession was sufficient for the infant covenant; but for a personal covenant a personal profession is indispensable, and without which, indeed, the infant title to Church privileges must be considered, in the case of an adult, to be invalidated. In the covenant of baptism, the infant was passive, and indeed was received into the Church, not on its own account—but as a part of its parent; and having therefore a covenant interest in the promises to the seed of believers.* But, in the adult covenant, personal obligations are involved, and personal graces called into exercise; and hence arises the necessity of a personal profession, as a visible investiture into the Church privileges of the covenant. The profession made at the Eucharist by no means answers this design, being connected with high privileges, to which it is necessary to prove a valid title, as a complete member of the visible church.

It is plain, therefore, that the Church has a right to demand such a confession as is exhibited at confirmation. She cannot judge of what she does not know. She does not pretend to be a searcher of hearts. She can only therefore determine by outward signs. The Apostles even hesitated to receive Saul into their

sect. 13. a work deservedly of high estimation. Compare also Baxter's Infant's Church Membership.

* See Gen. xvii. 7—10. Deut. xxix. 10—12. Acts ii. 39.

company, though with the strongest evidence of sincerity, until the voucher had been given to the Church of the credibility of his profession.* If the necessity of this profession be disallowed, what hinders the infidel or the heathen from advancing a claim on the ground of his infant baptism to the full privileges of the church, and the church herself from being thus virtually unchurched? Every church, therefore, practising infant baptism, insists upon a confession of faith, as an indispensable requisite for full communion with the visible body; and, this being admitted, we feel warranted to decide, without any unkind feelings to those who may conscientiously differ from us, that the profession of confirmation is more conformable to the practice of the Apostolical churches, and the custom of the primitive ages than any that prevails. It is indeed, in its intent, similar to the profession of adult baptism—"the answer of a good conscience towards God;"† in which the grace that had been faithfully prayed for in baptism is publicly acknowledged, and its increase sought and expected by the renewed application of the same faith.

We need scarcely add, that the character of this engagement is distinctly spiritual. What else shall we say to the whole tenor of the covenant between God and the infant, in the baptismal service? How shall we denominate the preface, question and answer, and the prayer in the Confirmation service? Are they not eminently spiritual? Is—"I do" renew the *solemn* promise—any thing less than a purpose of the heart? Can that be solemn which is mere lip-profession? Our church regards the confirmed as

* Acts ix. 26, 27. † 1 Pet. iii. 21.

ready for the communion; but she does not insist upon spiritual qualifications for the reception of that holy sacrament?* Consider our spiritual catechism on the one side, and our peculiarly spiritual Communion Service on the other; and we cannot surely make the intermediate Service of Confirmation to be of a different or less spiritual mould. As the preliminary however for a course of ministerial instruction upon this important subject, the rubbish of superstition and ignorance, which debases this ordinance, must be cleared away. Most parochial Ministers, in the course of catechetical inquiry, have elicited from their catechumens notions, which, had not familiar intercourse brought them to light, might have been deemed traditionary relics of the dark ages,—such as coming for the bishop's blessing, with no idea, desire, or expectation of the blessing of God—such, again, as relieving their sponsors of the burden of their sins and duties, as if personal responsibility were not coeval with the earliest period of "discernment between our right hand and our left hand;" or as if we, who are utterly unable to answer for ourselves, could answer for one another; or as if any one could be found to answer for one of us, but He, "who his own self bore our sins in his own body on the tree." The candidate for Confirmation in the true spirit of the rite, in the spirit of renunciation and faith, will come, not to take his sins upon himself, but hoping for the pardon of them through Christ; and in the simple devotedness of a pardoned and accepted sinner, to take his yoke upon him as his daily privilege and rule. With the more enlightened, who yet are ignorant of the spiritual requisitions of the service

* Compare the answer to the last question in the Catechism.

of God, errors are prevalent, less palpably absurd, but scarcely less dangerous. It is often expected to operate as a charm, having a blessing in itself, and as if the Christian path from henceforth would be more easy. Resolutions are connected with the ordinance itself, with more or less of sincerity, but the natural fruit of ignorance and self-deception. From that day a new era will begin ; a more serious course of life will be commenced; the world, if not wholly forsaken will be restrained within more measured limits. And all this is anticipated without any distinct feeling of helplessness, or perception of the need of a change of heart, or any habit of dependence on Divine grace. They are soon, however, reminded, that the difficulty must remain in full force, while the heart continues unchanged ; that the world will be as ensnaring, Satan as tempting, and sin as powerful after Confirmation as before ; that, if there is not at the present moment a sincere and humble desire of self-dedication to God, the day and service of Confirmation possess no innate power to give a new bias to the heart.—But we have also to contend with the gross misconceptions of parents respecting Confirmation. It is with them a respectable church form, with no meaning, and linked with no obligations. Their children are come to a proper age. It is right that they should receive the sacrament—fit or unfit ; and therefore, as a preliminary, it is decent that they should be confirmed ; that is, that they should promise solemnly, in the presence and in the house of God, what they have no desire or intention to perform ; and the performance of which, in many cases, would be in direct opposition to their parent's wishes, instructions, and example. It is impossible not to be affected with the rash heedlessness (not to speak

of the profane trifling with God) of parents, who, by encouraging their children in the profession of a wilful falsehood, strike a blow at the root of all moral obligations, Christian integrity, and even common honesty.

The direct system of instruction upon the subject of Confirmation must of course include a clear exposition of the nature and obligation of the baptismal vow. Every Christian is as strictly bound by the constraint of this vow, as if he had made it in his own person. It was made on his account, from a regard to his best interests, upon the consideration that he could not be brought too early into covenant with God, and into fellowship with Christ. As therefore his baptismal obligation bound him only for his good in the way of privilege, and to nothing in the way of duty, to which his relation to God had not previously bound him from the moment of his birth; he has every reason, when come to competent understanding, to set his own hand to it. He comes, therefore, now, in Confirmation, to affix his own seal to his infant baptism by his own act and deed; and to dedicate himself to God in that engagement, in which he had been dedicated to him in infancy. He now makes the declaration, not of what he wishes to do, but of what he does; not of what he would be, but of what he is. The grace that is prayed for at this ordinance, is, not that he may be able to devote himself to God; but that, having devoted himself, and now making the profession of it, he may be enabled to maintain his course to the end. Indeed upon the ground of the faith that was professed in his baptism, he has already called himself "a member of Christ," and has acknowledged his obligations to God, "who *hath called* him unto this state of salvation."

He is now come to confess before the church his humble and sincere readiness, according to the terms of the baptismal covenant, to renounce the service of his spiritual enemies; to accept the Gospel as his hope of salvation, and to determine by God's help, sought and obtained in earnest prayer, to continue in the way of God, to his life's end. Upon the ground of this credible profession, the Bishop, as the Minister of God, lays his hands upon him, with prayer, as the sign of the Holy Spirit already vouchsafed, and as an encouraging assurance, on God's behalf, of its confirmation and increase.

This we apprehend to be the meaning of the rite, upon the supposition of the sincerity of the confirmant. But we cannot shut our eyes to the lamentable fact, that a vast majority of those, who offer themselves as candidates for Confirmation, are alike ignorant of its nature, and unimpressed with its obligations. Various motives may operate. Some remember the profane merriment of the last occasion, and are willing to have their holiday, like others, in the mockery of the service of God. Some think to please their parents by this blind profanation, forgetting, how little able their parents will be to shelter them from the awful consequence of their wilful falsehood; and that the plea of parental obligation will be of little avail, when the heavy indictment appears against them at the bar of their Judge. Some think with their parents, that confirmation is proper for every young person, and that it is a reproach not to be confirmed; and therefore, though they have no more intention of leaving the world for Christ, than for quitting their country for a foreign land, they have an objection to the mere ceremony of a promise; and, for decency's sake they wish to be confirmed.

Now it is plain, that for young persons under these or similar misconceptions, a customary course of pulpit discussion would be inefficient. They need the simplest elementary instruction, conveyed to their minds in an interesting and arresting form.* They need to be awakened from their state of ignorance or carelessness, in order to be informed and encouraged. They require a close as well as a familiar and affectionate address; an adaptation of the general outline of instruction, (such as the detail of the baptismal vow) to their several tempers, habits, pleasures, temptations, and general conduct. Frequent inquiry into their intelligent, as well as experimental apprehension of truth, will be important. Texts, or short courses of reading might be marked with advantage, for their private meditation, and as subjects for examination of their state and progress in religious knowledge.† These might refer primarily to brief statements of the fundamental doctrines, to practical exhibitions of Christian duty, to affecting views of the Saviour's love, to portions for prayer, and to encouraging illustrations of the character and happiness of devotedness to God.‡ A

* The Writer cannot forbear to recommend a short Catechism on Confirmation, by Rev. J. Bickersteth, (Seeleys) as a valuable help to the parochial Minister.

† Bishop Butler plainly intimates personal conference to be an indispensable of preparation for confirmation. See his Charge to the Diocese of Durham, Works, ii. 422. Comp. also Bishop Wilson's Parochialia. Works, iv. 16—34.

‡ Take an example from an interesting biographical sketch of the Rev. T. Escreet, curate of Stisted, Essex, by the Rev. T. Webster, minister of Tavistock Chapel. Mr. Escreet was excited to labour as much as possible to prepare his young parishioners for the ordinance to which they were invited. He employed much time and labour in explaining the institution, expounding suitable passages of Scripture, and impressing upon their minds, the spirit and temper, and disposition, which they should cultivate. He addressed to them a series of discourses upon the subject, pointing

tender seriousness of address is best calculated for effect, as the medium of enforcing the constraining motives of the Gospel, combined with strong remonstrances upon the reasonableness of the service of God, and upon the ingratitude and rebellion of resisting the convictions of his love. 'Can you'—we might say to them—'hesitate to give your hearts to such a Saviour? How ungrateful, how inexcusable, this reluctance to so blessed a service! Had he been so reluctant to die for you, as you are to live for him, he would have enjoyed his glory in heaven, and would never have emptied himself of it, for your sakes. Think of the Son of God becoming a man of sorrows for you: and can you turn away from his command of love—"My son, give me thine heart?"'

The course, however, of private communication with catechumens, can only be sketched in its broad principles; the shaping of it into a more distinct and applicatory form will vary, more or less, in every instance. We come into contact with minds naturally cast into different moulds, or minds similarly constructed, but passing before us in different stages of ignorance or of inquiry, of resistance or of yielding to the constrain-

out, from 1 Sam. iii. 27, the blessedness of an early devotion to God; from Josh. xxiv. 15, the duty of choosing God's service; from 1 Pet. v. 8, the importance of resisting our great adversary; and from Heb. vi. 2, the grounds and utility of the institution, by the effect produced on the minds of the confirmed, and on the minds of others.' Again: 'Mr. Escreet earnestly called upon his young people, seriously to consider the nature of the ordinance, and carefully to examine themselves; to sit down and count the cost, to remember their obligations to Almighty God, that they must either serve him, their rightful Lord and Master, or join themselves to his enemies; and that therefore it was their true interest, as well as their bounden duty, to devote themselves entirely to God's service, and to pour out their souls in fervent prayers that he would accept the sacrifice, and receive and keep them for his own.'

ing influence of Evangelical motives. Upon an extended scale, where it would be nearly impracticable to insulate each particular case, perhaps classes might be formed with advantage, after short individual converse, and thus the familiar mode of instruction be, in a great measure at least, retained.* Considerable difficulty indeed, has been felt by some of our brethren, in ascertaining the precise qualification intended by the church for this holy, but alas! too often profaned rite. The language of the sixty-first canon is express—that we are to take especial care that none be presented, but such as we know are fit.† Now, if this canon be explained according to the letter of the mandate to the sponsor in the baptismal service, the fitness for confirmation would seem only to imply an acquaintance with

* This appears to have been the system pursued by Mr. Robinson of Leicester, in his extensive sphere. His 'confirmation season,' his biographer informs us, 'was one he particularly valued, and had reason to esteem as his choicest seed-time. He prepared his congregation for it by sermons; he collected the young people, arranged their names, insisted upon their regular attendance, as a condition of giving them a certificate, and addressed a sort of family lecture to them on the Church Catechism, which he accompanied with solemn and earnest prayer, during five or six weeks before the bishop appeared. In this interval he would talk with some of them familiarly, but seriously, in small parties; with some separately in his study: to all he made a present of his excellent little tract on the subject; to all he gave special and appropriate exhortations from the pulpit; to all he showed himself the faithful shepherd, leading his flock with great solemnity on the morning of the service, praying, exhorting, and at length presenting them with his own hands to his superior, and to his superior's Lord.

† So Abp. Secker quotes the canon, in the spirit, not in the letter (Charges, p. 55). The words of the canon are, 'that none shall be presented to the bishop, for him to lay his hands upon, but such as can *render an account of their faith*, according to the catechism in the said book contained.' The rubric in the Catechism respecting Confirmation, more accords with the *letter* of the archbishop's words, and probably was in his mind. As such as *he shall think fit* to be presented to the bishop to be confirmed.'

the Catechism, and the benefit *whether influential or not*, of instruction in its fundamental principles; including every species of the ungodly, who could readily attain this requisite, consistently with the habitual indulgence of wilful and flagrant sin. But that our church, in the account that she requires of the candidate's faith,* combined with a capacity to 'answer to the questions of the Catechism,'† a right sense of the meaning of the baptismal obligation, and a sincere intention to perform it, is sufficiently evident, as well from the fearful profanation, which must result from a mere adherence to the letter of the mandate, as from the recorded sentiments of some of her most orthodox and accredited authorities.—'I must entreat you,' as Secker charged his clergy, 'to endeavour that none be brought, but those who, to speak in the language of the Rubric, 'are come to years of discretion,' who have learned, not the words only, but in a competent degree, the meaning of what was promised for them in baptism, who can say with *seriousness and truth*, (*what surely else they ought not to say at all*,) that 'in the presence of God and the congregation, they ratify and confirm the same in their own persons.'' Bishop Burnet speaks most plainly and admirably to the same point.‡

Nothing can be more satisfactory than these recorded judgments of two of the authorised guardians of our church, deservedly of great name among us. It needs only be added, that the compliance with the letter of the mandate, in a large majority of instances, gives

* See the words of the canon quoted above.

† Preface to Confirmation Service, and rubric appended to the catechism.

‡ Secker, Charges, p. 53. Pastoral Care, ch. viii.

plausible ground to the objections of Dissenters; is utterly inconsistent with the spiritual character of our church, and the spiritual engagements she requires from her members; and reduces the ordinance of Confirmation to an empty ceremony, productive of no possible benefit to the persons confirmed, and bearing only the stamp of wilful falsehood, and solemn mockery, insulting to the presence and house of a holy, jealous God. The difficulty, however, that is often and painfully felt, of complying with what has been usually considered the requisition of the church, will be materially diminished, by a decided course of applicatory instruction. It has been found curious and most affecting to observe the effect of an experiment that was made of this system. At the commencement of the course, all the catechumens were constant in their attendance; but as the subject gradually approached into closer contact with their consciences, and was brought closer still by individual inquiry and grappling remonstrances, the numbers gradually diminished, (as in Gideon's army, though not in the same fearful proportion,) until they had dwindled down to one half of their original number. The "mixed multitude" soon began to find the gate too strait, and the way too narrow, for their pleasures, self indulgence, and habits of sin, and retired; they discovered that they had altogether mistaken the matter, and that, what they had conceived to be only a decent form, or perhaps a day of mirth, involved a profession which in common honesty they dared not make, and obligations which they had neither desire nor purpose to bind upon their consciences. And though they were repeatedly warned, that the declining of the public profession still left the obligations of the baptismal vow in their full

force; yet there was a solemn aggravation of hypocrisy in the profession, without any possible good resulting from it, that, when pressed with closeness upon their consciences, they had not the hardihood to presume upon. They were often assured of the earnest desire of their Minister that they should be confirmed, while he felt it most incumbent upon him to explain to them the real nature of Confirmation—as the ratification, 'with their own mouth *and consent*, openly before the church, of their baptismal engagement of renunciation, faith, and obedience. If they were willing 'to confirm this promise in their own persons,' it was equally his duty and privilege to encourage them. But if they were in *heart and life* unwilling, would they not present themselves to the bishop with a falsehood in their mouths; the guilt of which would be in no degree diminished by the awful fact of a multitude uniting with them in it, but rather would be aggravated by every circumstance of the occasion—the light and knowledge which made it wilful, and the presence of God in his own house, with the Minister and representatives of his church? By this mode, there would be little occasion for a stretch of Ministerial prerogative. Their drawing back will be their own act and deed. It will not be, that we forbid them, but that they will decline: the discouragement, indeed, to their wishes and intentions will be at our door; while the responsibility of declining the profession will be entirely their own. It is obvious, that the tone of this system would be widely different, not only with the more encouraging cases, but also, wherever the first marks of discouragement began to exhibit a more hopeful and favourable aspect. Not a few there will be, at this important season, who will call us closely to tread in our

beloved Master's steps, in his merciful tenderness in not breaking "the bruised reed or quenching the smoking flax." But with the careless, the more respectable—still remaining either unintelligent or unimpressed—and even with the doubtful, this system may be pursued in perfect consistency with Ministerial tenderness, though not indeed, (in some instances more especially,) without some conflict with our personal feelings, and probably some taking up of a Ministerial cross. It is important in all cases to hold out the language of invitation to the last stage of inquiry, lest we seem to prescribe limits to the grace of God, and hinder, as far as men can do, the operation of his own work, by want of conciliation, patience, and love.

The difficulties in the right treatment of Confirmation are exceedingly great. They begin in our own bosoms; they belong to the various motives operating in the minds of catechumens, their different states of mind, the conflicting opinions in our parishes, especially among Dissenters, and the differences perhaps of sentiment among our own brethren;—and even, if none of these things embarrass us, there is the pain of possibly dismissing any, that may have even a latent germ of true piety,—the pain of admitting *neutrals*—those of whose cases we have no decided judgment. Truly it is a season calling for special prayer; that power and wisdom may be given to us to lay bare the heart of the candidate to his own eyes; and that, seeing our path clearly, we may with satisfaction to ourselves, and conviction to those concerned, make our decision.

The proper age for Confirmation has been variously determined. In England, during the reign of Popery, children were usually confirmed at five years of age. The Council of Trent appointed the time between

seven and twelve years. Another council at Milan forbade the confirming of any under seven. The consistency of this requisition with the true genius of Popery is evident. It was like their six other sacraments, an *opus operatum* upon passive agents.—Calvin determined the age of ten, an age usually far too young for intelligent sincerity or profession. Our church has more wisely marked the time indefinitely—'come to the years of discretion,'—an era, which must vary in some degree according to natural capacity, and opportunities of instruction, and preparation for a participation in the rite with permanent influence upon the mind. Few young persons reach this era before the age of thirteen, and not many so early.

We must deeply regret, that instances should occur of Ministerial unfaithfulness, giving any plausible pretext for the misconceptions of Dissenters, as to the nature and value of this rite; but that "eye" must "be evil" indeed, that makes no distinction between a rite diligently improved as a vehicle of important instruction and personal conviction, and the same right left on its own nakedness, unconnected with Christian instruction upon the basis of Christian motives; and therefore from Ministerial neglect, and not from unscriptural superstition, made an occasion of affronting mockery to God under the shadow of a reasonable and acceptable service. Is there no difference between a promiscuous multitude gathered—like the assembly at Ephesus—"the more part of whom knew not wherefore they were come together"*—and between a "little flock," duly instructed in the nature of their obligations, and coming to the house of God to testify their

* Acts xix. 32.

public and willing surrender to the service of their Saviour? Methinks candour would forbear to condemn, where it could not wholly accord; and Christian simplicity and love would forgive the mode in the approval of the end, and would be ready to say—"The blessing of the Lord be upon you; we bless you in the name of the Lord."*

We may add a suggestion on the importance of keeping alive the impressions of the season of Confirmation in our subsequent Ministry. Much of the anticipated blessing has often been lost from the neglect of "stirring up the minds" of the confirmants, from time to time, "by way of remembrance." Would it not be desirable occasionally to make them the objects of our pulpit addresses; to press home inquiries more closely in private conference as to their maintenance of Christian sincerity; and to assemble them periodically for the purpose of renewed, systematic, and self examining exhortation, to an habitual and consistent fulfilment of these obligations?

As *a mere ceremony*, nothing can be more unmeaning, or we might say, more profane, than Confirmation. As *an ordinance*, seriously considered, and conscientiously improved, it will never fail to open successively important eras in our parochial Ministry, in which the diligent labour of the Minister of Christ "abounding in the work of the Lord," is sealed with special tokens of Divine assurance and acceptance. Not, indeed, that we could in any case regret the extraordinary efforts that the season may have excited; for, even if not a single instance of a visible blessing had been vouchsafed, yet the opportunities then specially afforded

* Psalm cxxix. 8.

of exciting a spirit of prayer for the rising generation, of bringing the grace and mercy of the Saviour into more immediate contact with their understandings and affections, and of detailing before them a more explicit exhibition of their solemn and unchangeable obligations, cannot be wholly unproductive of a blessing to our own hearts; and may be confidently expected to produce an ultimate and abundant harvest in many of those cases which present no immediate prospect of encouragement. A memorandum book to enter minutes of conversation with candidates for confirmation would furnish many useful and interesting recollections. The following may furnish a sample:—

The approach of A. B. to Confirmation gave me, from the beginning, unmixed uneasiness. My conversations with him, from time to time, on the subject, elicited no satisfactory evidences of true penitence. The habit of his mind and character was decidedly, though not grossly, wordly; and therefore the profession of renunciation of the world in entireness and sincerity was the main point of examination, and of the specific application of the baptismal vow to his individual case. He professed increased seriousness of mind, and a readiness to give more consideration than hitherto to the subject of religion; but the intention of buying "the pearl of great price," at the cost of "selling all that he had," I fear, had never found a place in his heart. I entered into the subject with him in close conversation, entreaty, and prayer. 'Are you willing to stand to this profession, to renounce all that this world offers for Christ?' He was afraid—not all: he was willing to give up some things, but he could not say more. I told him that some, and not all, meant nothing: that where there was not a readiness to forsake

all, it was more than doubtful whether there was a real desire and sincere intention to yield any thing. That "faith" which alone could enable him *cheerfully* to make one sacrifice for Christ, was "the victory that overcometh the world," in every form of temptation in which it could present itself. I should have spoken to him in a different tone, and should have made allowance for hesitation and conflict in his mind, had I felt any reason for hope, that the germ of Christian sincerity, even in its weakest influence, was hid in the ground of his heart. But I had no competent satisfaction or encouragement on this point. He hoped that he might be of a different mind some future day; but at present he was not prepared to come up to the requisitions of the Gospel. The gate was too strait, and the way too narrow: he had not counted the cost; or, if he had, he was not prepared to abide it. The faint resolutions which he was ready to make derived all their strength from his own resources, and were little, if at all, connected with a sense of helplessness and dependence upon strength from above. It was therefore easy to determine their character, and the certainty of their failure.

Another case, slightly varying in its character and mode of treatment, though with the same melancholy issue, was that of C. D. a wild and careless lad, whose mind had never been troubled hitherto with the most cursory thought of religion. The world was every thing with him; all his care, all his employ, all his delight. Eternity, with its infinitely momentous stake, he wholly disregarded. Confirmation, in his view, was a thing of course. Several of his family had gone to the last Confirmation; and he was old enough for the present; and he thought that, if he could repeat his

catechism, that was enough. I endeavoured to impress serious conviction upon his conscience, but could only obtain a promise that he would turn the matter over in his mind. Some slight impressions, however, were made by repeated conversations. As the time drew near, I endeavoured to bring his mind to a crisis. He told me that he was willing to be confirmed; to which I replied, 'I am glad to hear it, if it be really true that you wish to confirm your baptismal vow, and really to renounce the devil, the world, and the flesh. But I must make you understand the meaning and seriousness of the determination you have just expressed. Confirmation is a promise you are going to make—or rather to renew—to God. You are going to promise great things,—things which, if you perform them, will make the world wonder. You are going to promise the great, holy, heart-searching God, that you will, from this time forth, for ever renounce, forsake and abhor the devil and all his works; sin of every kind, of every degree, whatever your conscience tells you to be wrong; and that you will resist with all your might whatever temptations have hitherto overcome you. These are great things for you to promise.' 'I doubt,' said he, 'I am not fit: I had rather not go.' Not at present taking any notice of his hesitation, I proceeded —'You are in the world from morning to night; Satan puts every temptation in your way—sin, the neglect of God, the neglect of his word, and prayer; your companions draw you as far as they can from every serious thought about your soul, your Saviour, or eternity. Now you are going to promise, that when you meet them to-morrow you will strive against them as far as you can; and if they will not hear you, that you will turn away from them. This is a part of the

and I continued—'Do let me tell you how much happier a thing it is to serve God than to run after the world: at least let me persuade you to make the trial. God has more to give you than the world, and if you will but ask him—"he giveth liberally and upbraideth not." Now have you really ever asked him?' 'I think I have prayed lately; but, I doubt, not with all my heart.' I continued my instructions at some length. His conscience was evidently under the temporary power of conviction, but he could not make up his mind to the cost. The chains of sin and Satan were too strong to be broken by such faint and unproductive convictions.

E. F. was a child in the Sunday School, evidently under the influence of Divine grace at the period of Confirmation. Happily for herself, she was not gifted with fluency of utterance; but the little that was elicited by patient questioning bore upon it the genuine stamp of the language of the heart. 'How do you feel about being confirmed, now the time is come?' 'Not, by a great deal, as I could wish.' 'I suppose you feel it a great thing to do; would you wish *not* to be confirmed?' 'No—I wish to serve God.' 'And what good do you expect it will do you?' 'None at all, except I go with a true heart.' 'What does Confirmation mean?' 'The giving up of the heart to God.' 'But were you not given up to God soon after you were born?' 'Yes when I was baptized.' 'Then why do you want to be confirmed?' '*To give up myself to God.*' 'It will cost you a good deal: there is so much to be given up first. Would you give your heart wholly to God?' 'I will try.' 'Is there nothing in the world that you love so well as God?' 'I do not think there is.' 'But do you think that you can

ever perform these great things that you are going to promise? 'Not without God's help.' 'But to whom does God give his help?' 'To them that ask him.' 'But what hope have you of God's help?' 'Because he has promised.' 'And what made God promise it to you?' 'Because Jesus Christ died for sinners.' 'Now you are going to promise to renounce all that the devil, the world, and your own wicked heart tempt you against following the word of God; which of these three do you find to be the hardest?' 'I think I find my heart the greatest trouble.' 'And how do you expect to overcome?' 'By faith, by believing in Jesus Christ so as to love him.' 'What are the Articles of the Christian faith?' 'All that the Bible tells me of Jesus Christ.' 'And do you really believe all that you read about him?' 'I hope I do, but not enough.' 'Do you believe in him so as to try to seek him?' 'I hope I do, but not enough: I wish I did.' 'What do you think of God's commandments: do you think you can keep them?' 'By God's grace I will try; I find them very comfortable.'—There was not much enlargement of mind, but sufficient to mark the guidance of the Spirit of truth. Monosyllables, however, that in many instances betoken no more than a cold and unmeaning assent, in her case evidenced at once the timidity of her character, and the sincerity of her profession.

We have only to remark the importance of sealing Confirmation engagements at the Sacramental Table; not in all cases as a necessary and immediate consequent, but as connected with a due preparation, and a competent judgment of Christian intelligence and sincerity. Nothing indeed can be more injudicious or more injurious, than the precipitation with which young persons, immediately after Confirmation, are hurried to

the Lord's table, as if all scrutiny of the sincerity of their profession, and all intelligent preparation for that solemn ordinance might readily be dispensed with. Where their consciences are not benumbed in formality or indifference, the fruit of this rash decision of treatment has usually been found in heartless profession of religion, characterized by indolent unavailing regret. Not indeed that we would wilfully err on the other extreme, and expect *every thing to be quite satisfactory*— "We wish their perfection," but we must not wait for it, to debar them in almost the lowest gradation of sincerity (and what more than sincerity had the Apostles at the original institution of the ordinance?) from an ordinance, which, by fixing them in communion with the Christian church, is most helpful to their establishment in the profession of the Gospel.*

CHAPTER V.

SACRAMENTAL INSTRUCTION.

THE dispensations of the Sacraments must be considered as one of the most important parts of our Ministry. The blessings of the Gospel which in the preaching of the Gospel are promiscuously offered to believers, are here sealed to each severally by a pastoral distribution. The Sacraments may therefore be truly called the visible word, as representing to our eyes by

* The admission of the young, of a satisfactory character, to the Lord's table has the sanction of many eminent Ministers. Most interesting details will be found in Philip Henry's Life, pp. 11, 84, 195. Comp. also Scott's Life, pp. 619, 620. For their especial use the Writer ventures to recommend a Catechism by Rev. J. Bickersteth, as eminently simple, intelligent, and spiritual.

visible signs, what in the word is spoken to our ears. They are therefore a most useful Confirmation of our faith, as the seal and word of God, that in the exercise of faith we shall as surely be partakers of Christ, and of all the benefits of the covenant, as we are of its outward signs. The definition of Sacrament may therefore be taken generally—"the seal of the righteousness of faith."* What a sacredness does this view give to their authority! that nothing should be added to them, or taken from them! What less than treason would it be to alter without authority the royal seal? And to violate the integrity of the Christian Sacraments is no other than the defilement of which God complains in Israel—"the setting up of their threshold by my thresholds, and their post by my posts."† Its mode, decency, order, and circumstantials of their celebration, the church justly claims the liberty to prescribe within the limits, and agreeably to the spirit of the Apostolic rule,‡ preserving at the same time most carefully the substance and form of the elements, and the clear exposition of the blessed designs represented by them.

Yet in the administration of the Sacraments, how often are parochial Ministers conversant with the errors of Popery without the name! How much has their real efficacy been injured by the veil of ignorance or misconception! Specific instruction therefore upon their spiritual character, privileges, and obligations, is of the utmost importance.

* Rom. iv. 11. † Ezek. xliii. 7, 8. ‡ 1 Cor. xiv. 26.

SECTION I.

BAPTISM.

'WHAT mean ye by this service?' is a question that might be asked of us by many, who bring their children to baptism, only because it is the custom of their place, or the usual mode of naming their children. They need the plainest instructions* upon the nature of this sacrament, as the door of admission (not into any particular church, but) into the visible church of Christ, as a seal of the covenant of grace, confirming the promises of the covenant by a sign and pledge, in which we are mutually engaged to God and God to us, in which we are visibly consecrated to his service, bound to our duty, and inheritors of his promises. Its Divine institution proves its spiritual character. To conceive of Christian ordinances for hypocrites or unbelievers, is an anomaly. *The privileges of Baptism* are an investiture with the promises of the Christian covenant, such as union with Christ, adoption into the family of God, and the inheritance of heaven. *The grace of Baptism* is accurately explained by our Church to be "a death unto sin, and a new birth unto righteousness;"† a real, not a relative change.

Though however these are the real privileges of the covenant, of which baptism is the initiatory seal, yet experience and observation too plainly prove that they are not necessarily linked with the outward administration of the ordinance. The promises (as to our

* Bishop Burnet strongly inculcates the necessity of baptismal instruction. Pastoral Care, ch. viii.

† See Church Catechism.

interest in them) are invalid without faith. And the design of baptism was, that the believer's covenant interest for his children might here be pleaded and made good. But a doubting spirit, or positive unbelief, substitutes uncertainty in the place of the appropriate act, confession, and thanksgiving of faith, and consequently, as to this point, annuls the covenant interest of the believer made to faith.* A Christian parent bringing his child to the font for the sign and seal of spiritual regeneration, in the assurance of his child's joint interest in the promises of the covenant; the sponsors at the same time in dependence on the promises, engaging in the child's name, to renounce the service of his enemies, "to believe in God, and serve him," and joining in prayer for the confirmation of those privileges to the child—such a sight exhibits a clear and animating warrant of faith, most honourable to the Divine ordinance.†

* See Rom. iv. 11—17. May not many of the objections to Mr. Budd's valuable work on Baptism be traced to a want of power to elevate our faith to the simple reception of the Divine engagements in their fullest extent?

† 'The efficacy of baptism is putting the child's name into the Gospel grant. The child's actual faith, repentance, and obedience are thereby made debts, then incurred, to be paid at a future time. And surely this is abundantly sufficient to invite and encourage parents to dedicate their children in baptism. As to the *real influence of baptism*, when the children grow up, we are sure that their baptismal regeneration, without something else, will not bring them to heaven; and yet it may be urged, in praying to God to give them grace, and in persuading them to submit to it.' Matthew Henry on Baptism, pp. 130, 131. In the same valuable treatise, he bears his own personal testimony to the ordinance—'I cannot but take occasion,' said he, 'to express my gratitude to God for my infant baptism; not only as it was an early admission into the visible body of Christ, but as it furnished my pious parents with a good argument (and as I trust through grace a prevailing argument) for an early dedication of my own self to God in my childhood. If God has wrought any good work upon my soul, I desire with humble thankfulness to acknowledge the moral influence of my infant baptism upon it.' P. 118.

But our people, as baptized professors of the Gospel, must not sleep *unconscious of their obligations.* In our covenant to renounce the enemies of God and of our soul, to accept the Saviour as the ground of our hope, and to walk in the way of God, is there no power of conviction to arrest the self-indulgent, the unbelieving, and the disobedient? In the privileges, sealed to the faithful acceptance of the baptismal engagements, are there no motives to deadness to the world, love to the Saviour, confession of his cross, meetness for his kingdom? Philip Henry, 'in dealing with his children about their spiritual state, took hold of them very much by the handle of their infant baptism, and frequently inculcated upon them, that they were born in God's house, and were betimes dedicated and given up to him, and therefore were obliged to be his servants.'*

Parents and sponsors must be reminded, that the offering a child to God, though a common, is a most solemn and difficult, service. It is an awful profanation to "offer the blind for sacrifice;"† and most important, that they should understand *what they do*, in binding themselves and their children to the service of God—*and why they do it*—in conformity to the terms of the covenant—the will and appointment of God, as the renewal of their own personal covenant—and as their pledge that their children shall be the Lord's for ever. These should be points in our Ministry of close and serious conviction, no less than of evangelical encouragement. They need to be instructed, that the covenant made with the parents and their seed, and apprehended by the parent for his seed jointly with

* Psalm cxvi. 16. Philip Henry's Life, p. 85. † Mal. i. 8.

himself, is the ground of the Christian's dedication of his child in baptism—that by this sacred act they profess their personal consecration to his service, (for who can give his child freely and sincerely to God, except he had "first given his own self to the Lord ?") and that they must daily train the child in the remembrance that he is not their's but God's. They must be reminded of the great honour of being entrusted with such a charge, and of the fearful guilt of neglecting so responsible a trust. *Where it is practicable*, no sponsors or parents should present themselves at the font without previous Ministerial instruction ;* that they may, under the Divine blessing, be led to this ordinance with a penitent, upright, believing, thankful, and cheerful spirit—such a spirit, as God "delighteth to honour."

Nor should we forget to inculcate the *improvement of the baptismal engagements*. Much use may be made of it as a restraint from sin†—an excitement to duty—as a support to faith—an encouragement to prayer ; and the remembrance of the investiture of privileges may animate to press for a real participation of them—and to live as living members of a living head—in spiritual communion with a spiritual church.‡

* For this purpose the Writer begs to recommend 'Four Dialogues on Baptism' (Hatchard,) as most valuable for parochial distribution—popular in their form, spiritual in their character, practical in their tendency.

† Luther mentions a Christian woman—'Quæ quotie tentabatur, non *nisi baptismo suo repugnabat*—dicens brevissime—Christiana sum.' 'Intellexit enim hostis'—adds Luther—'statim *virtutem baptismi, et fidei, quæ in veritate promittentis pendebat, et fugit ab eo.*'

‡ In some of the American churches the baptized children are assembled periodically in the church, with their guardians, and the elders of the church, and addressed by their pastor upon the obligation of their vow. Much permanent blessing is stated to

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SUPPER.

...s an admirable rule relative to ...manage it, that the weak might ...and yet the ordinance might not ...instructions on this point should ...ence to both these objects. We ...standard too high for the humble, ...ious. Nor must we open the door ...of all.† Our instruction must vary ...he character of the recipient. To the ...self-righteous, the spiritual character, and ...obligations of the ordinance, the guilt ...y in uniting in the deep-toned abasement ...exercises of our mode of administration ...rresponding experience, and most of all the ...demnation of unworthy participation, are ...of direct and solemn conviction. We may ...odate to this case the awful prophetic impre- ...-that the "table" of the Lord will "become ...before them, and that, which should have been ...r welfare, will become a trap."‡ To those who

arisen from this plan. We cannot but wish that similar ...blies could be transferred with the same ecclesiastical solem- ...into the services of our Establishment; or at least, that the ...of this imposing ceremony were transferred into our ordinary ...istrations in a more frequent and affectionate enforcement of ...smal responsibilities.

* Life, p. 43.

...he exclusion of the ungodly, under every form, from Chris- ...nmunion, seems to be directly implied, if not commanded! ...xliv. 6—9.

‡ Psalm lxix. 22.

wish to commence their attendance in this unsatisfactory state, we should strongly recommend delay, with much self-inquiry and earnest prayer for Christian sincerity and Divine illumination.—To the sincere, but scrupulous we must show, that there are sins of unbelief as well as of presumption, sin in refusing to come as well as in coming unworthily—the guilt of disobedience to the dying command of our best and dearest friend—the neglect of the privilege of a heavenly feast, of an open confession of the cross, and of brotherly communion with the followers of Christ. In the early stage of awakened tenderness and concern, instruction and encouragement are peculiarly needed. The weakest disciple has an equal right to this ordinance with the most established. Perfect assurance is not required; rather the want of it is supposed. The seal is given in confirmation of what otherwise might be a matter of doubt. Let them consider *the solemnity* of the ordinance as enforcing preparation, and *its simplicity*, as encouraging faith; and so let them come with the humility and reverence of faith, and who can doubt of their acceptance?*

Much important use may however be made of the ordinance as preparatory to express and immediate invitation. It may be exhibited at an early stage of impression; as presenting the most full and simple

* Mr. Robinson, on one occasion in his early Ministry, being surprised by the ardent and determined wish of a stranger to attend his sacrament, and having in vain recommended delay, at length asked him—'Do you cordially grieve for sin? Is your dependence simply upon Christ? Is your mind fully bent upon serving God in holiness?' The man answering satisfactorily, was desired to listen to the service, to look for Divine direction, and if his heart were still inclined, to come with assurance of welcome. Strength and consolation were given, "and he went on his way rejoicing." Life, pp. 45—47.

view of the blessed atonement; as calculated to deepen the sensibilities of the heart in meditation on the scenes of Gethsemane and Calvary; and as leading the young Christian to contemplate a positive obligation to count the cost of the consequent engagements, and to anticipate the enjoyment of its attendant privileges. Familiar expositions of the Communion service will furnish the most evangelical view of the ordinance, while they give the communicant an intelligent view of the form of its administration—the want of which has often been found a serious hindrance to edification. Sacramental meetings are most important for the use of catechumens equally with communicants; that when the palpable pulse of spiritual life should warrant the language of direct invitation, the tenderness of feeling may be accompanied with a corresponding habit of spiritual intelligence—the defect of which, even in worthy participants, perplexes the exercise of faith in "discerning the Lord's body." Individual pastoral instruction also will prove most effectual in restoring this ordinance to its high dignity among the Christian means of grace, of instrumentally "adding to the church such as should be saved."

CHAPTER VI.

CLERICAL AND CHURCH COMMUNION.

"THE communion of saints" was ordained of God for the accomplishment of some of the highest privileges of the Gospel. The neglect of it is consequently connected with the absence or low enjoyment of these privileges. Without it, the body of Christ may exist, but it cannot thrive. The decline of the

exercises of Christian love and unity, by which it is maintained is but too evident, and its revival by all Scriptural means would open a new era of spiritual prosperity for the church. As it consists, and becomes effectual "by that which every joint supplieth"* by the links of union, which connect every Christian and Minister with his own society, the same means and materials are at hand for all circumstances. Shall we not find, that, if union with our Head were more distinctly kept in view, and if the several members moved in more connected harmony, there would be more abundant communication of spiritual gifts and graces, and the great end of the Gospel would be more effectually attained—not merely the salvation of so many individuals, but the effecting of this salvation, by uniting them into a body, and making them the channels of spiritual life to one another?

We shall consider this subject in reference to ourselves and our people.

SECTION I.

CLERICAL COMMUNION.

DIFFERENCE of doctrinal views have proved serious hindrances to brotherly communion among ourselves. Even the grand uniting doctrine of the Christian's expectancy of his Lord's coming has set brother against brother, by the diversion of the mind from the heavenly glory of the events to uncertain speculations and circumstantials connected with it.† Indifference to the

* Eph. iv. 15, 16.

† One cannot but remark—Had all the discussions on this subject been conducted in the spirit of Mr. Stewart's Sermons on the Advent, what a glow of Christian love and heavenly anticipa-

subject has also greatly hindered this privilege. A more enlivening union with our Lord (like the magnet, uniting the several particles to each other, as well as attracting them to itself,) would be the best curative for this evil. Clerical meetings also, upon the Apostolical principle of assembling for mutual sympathy, provocation, and exhortation* would be most important. Massillon characterizes them as 'those holy assemblies, so calculated to maintain a sacerdotal union among the Ministers, a sacred harmony, in order to animate us individually to the uniform observance of the duties of the Ministry of the Church, and a support in order to clear up, or remove the doubts, and obviate the difficulties of it.'† This is a just view of what Clerical meetings ought to be—of a spiritual and pastoral character, distinguished by brotherly sympathy, counsel, and faithfulness—conducted in the spirit with which Eliot reminded his brethren on a similar occasion—'The Lord Jesus takes much notice of what is done and said among his Ministers when they are together. Come, let us pray before we part.'‡ Such was the character and spirit of Archbishop Grindal's 'preaching exercises,' which Lord Bacon pronounced to be the best way

tion would have pervaded the church. But would 'brethren grudge one against another' on account of the circumstantials of the event (however important they might be considered to be), did they *really believe ?*—"Behold the judge standeth before the door." James v. 9.

* Heb. x. 24, 25.

† Charges, pp. 224, 225. The meetings to which he alludes were held in some religious house, called the Retreat, and the time devoted to meditation, prayer, exposition of Scripture, and mutual conference. In taking his leave of Massillon, the Writer has been much affected to observe his impressive and awakening truths to be connected with most erroneous statements, and often with a total deficiency of Christian doctrine.

‡ Mather's Life of Eliot.

to frame and train up preachers to handle the Word of God as it ought to be handled, that hath been practised.'* Union in spirit, counsel, prayer, and service among the Ministers of Christ, by every practicable means, and even with considerable exercise of mutual confidence, would operate with most important effect upon our work.

* Full particulars are given in Strype and Fuller. They seem to have consisted of meetings of Clergy within large districts under the presidency of some experienced Minister for the purpose of discussing, seriatim, passages of Scripture previously proposed—always commencing and ending with prayer. Lord Bacon (Treatise concerning the Church) recommends the adoption of these exercises in the Universities. They were however put down by an arbitrary enactment of Queen Elizabeth under the influence of her favourite the Earl of Leicester, and in opposition to a most noble and Christian protest from Archbishop Grindal in a letter to Elizabeth. They were however, partially revived in the next reign by the connivance or encouragement of Archbishop Matthew. Archbishop Tenison enlarged and improved the design. In his circular letter, April 6, 1699, (quoted by Dr. Woodward—Account of Religious Societies, ch. iv.) we have the following admirable advice. 'It were to be wished, that the Clergy of every neighbourhood would agree upon frequent meetings to consult for the good of religion in general, and to advise with one another about any difficulties that may happen in their particular cures—as, 'By what methods any evil custom may most readily be broken? How a sinner may most effectually be reclaimed? And in general, how each of them in their several circumstances may contribute most to the advancement of religion?' 'Such consultations as these, besides the mutual benefit of advice and instruction, will be a natural means to excite the zeal of some, and reduce the over-eagerness of others to a due temper, and to provoke all to a religious emulation in the improvement of piety and order within their respective parishes.' Bishop Burnet also strongly recommends meetings of this character. (Past. Care, ch. viii.) And in our own time Bishop Burgess has given them the sanction of his authority. Herman of Cologne had combined Archbishops Grindal's and Tennison's plans in his system of Reformation. See his work ut supra, fol. 273.

SECTION II.

CHURCH COMMUNION.

UNION among our people is a matter of main concern. Who does not see the propriety of numbering schisms among the works of the flesh?* of "marking those which cause divisions, and avoiding them," as "serving not the Lord Jesus Christ, but their own"† selves; seeking a name and party for themselves, instead of "forbearing one another in love," to win souls to Christ. Let the nature of schism be clearly explained —as a separation from a Christian Church, not necessary for salvation; and a rent in the body of Christ, without any evident increase of opportunities for the service of God—*Let its guilt be strongly exposed*— —as opposed to the spirit of the Gospel, injurious to the best interests of the church, and encouraging the selfish principles of our corrupt hearts. The study of 1 Cor. xii. gives the Scriptural view of the subject— marking the fixed office of every member of the body, and their mutual connexion and dependence—each of us, therefore, as members of the body of the Church, being no more independent of each other, than we are of Christ. The subsequent chapter marks "the more excellent way" of "the bond of perfectness." The connexion of the two chapters would lead us to combine decision in fundamentals, with forbearance in non-essentials; and thus, in the spirit of Christian stedfastness would be consummated that Church union, which is a grand subject of our Lord's intercession, and a chief means of conviction to the world.‡

* Gal. v. 20, with 1 Cor. iii. 1—3. † Rom. xvi. 17, 18.
‡ See John xvii. 21.

The *inculcation of practical religion* in its evidence of meekness, humility, self-denial, and love, will silently operate, if not in active opposition, yet in impeding the progress of the evil. Skilful, tender, and seasonable consolation will be administered,—"making increase of the body to the edifying of itself in love."

Popular expositions of our services may be suggested—'not with a view to extol them immoderately, much less to provide wrath against those who dissent from us, but mildly to answer unjust imputations upon our Liturgy, and chiefly to show the meaning, the reasons, the uses of each part, that the congregation may, as the Apostle expresses it, "pray with the understanding."* The unmeaning cry—"The temple of the Lord are we,"†—excites the ridicule of enemies, without bringing conviction to our friends; but illustration of the spiritual character, ordinances, and worship of the establishment, furnishes a sound and charitable warrant for enforcing a steady adherance to her communion.

With regard also to the *mode of administration*, we cannot be too strongly impressed with the immense importance of a solemn, intelligent, devotional reading of our Liturgical services; of devoting to all the interests of our mind, and throwing into them all the exercise of our hearts. When we do justice to them, and enter into their spirit, the form ceases to be mere form, being enlivened by the spirit of prayer and heavenly unction.‡

* Secker's Charges, pp. 293, 294. For most exquisite specimens of this exposition—see Life of George Herbert.

† Jer. vii. 4.

‡ Some admirable remarks from Bishops Spratt and Bull on this subject, may be found in the Clergyman's Instructor, pp. 246, 309.

Frequent communion at the Lord's table tends much to unite our people together in the constant remembrance, that they, "being many, are one body and one bread, and partakers of that one bread,"* and therefore are bound to each other by the most endearing engagements.†

The *full preaching of the Gospel* is however the grand cementing bond. 'Feed your people better, and they will not stray'—was the reply of a Non-conformist to a neighbouring Minister, who complained that he had drawn away his people.‡ And though the enemy is too successful, even in the most Scriptural churches, in "beguiling unstable souls from the simplicity that is in Christ," yet the standard of the Gospel is a wall of defence against any material injury.

We need not scruple to say of candid and orthodox dissenters in our parishes—"Give them of the fruit

* 1 Cor. x. 17.

† This is especially the case, when sacramental meetings are connected with this holy ordinance; and more particularly when their design is enlarged (as in intelligent Christian congregations, it well may be) to embrace the main objects of church communion —in uniting in prayer for our personal progress in the Christian life—for our families, unconverted friends, or Christian friends in affliction—for our congregations, in their different states of ignorance, indifference, or of awakening interest, and consistent profession and enjoyment of the gospel—for our immediate neighbourhoods—for the general spread of the kingdom of Christ throughout the world—and for a holy and joyful anticipation of his second coming. Prayer is the embodying of Christian love in the most spiritual, enlivening, and practical operations, and therefore meetings of this character and in this spirit must have a most important influence in strengthening the bonds of unity and communion in Christian churches.

‡ 'Eloquence may dazzle, and argument may compel the homage of its intellectual admirers; but it is only, if armed with the panoply of scriptural truth, that there will *gather and adhere* to the preacher a people, who hunger for the bread of life, and make a business of their eternity. *To fill the church well, we must fill the pulpit well.*' Chalmers's Sermons at St. John's Church, Glasgow. p. 392.

of their hands, and let their own works praise them in the gates."* But combined with hearty good-will to them, we should still recommend to our people a strict adherence to our own pale, and a diligent and thankful improvement of its privileges. Some indeed are indifferent whom they follow, and, as a proof of their expansive love they would follow all. But this was not the rule of Christ,† or of his Apostles ;‡ nor is it recommended by the experience of its own disciples, who are usually found at the extreme point from Christian stedfastness, and more distinguishable by itching ears, than by teachable hearts ; with zeal enough to drive them forward, but with no judgment to direct their course. Yet should not the rise and progress of the evil be with us a matter of self-inquiry ? Baxter exclaims—' O that the Ministry had been more guiltless of those errors and schisms that they talk against ! But it is easier to chide a sectary in the pulpit, and to subscribe a testimony against them, than to play the skilful physician for their cure, and do the tenth part of the duty that lieth upon us, to prevent and heal such calamitous distempers.'§ The tares were sown, "*while men slept.*"‖ And we might ask for our own

* Prov. xxxi. 31. Some admirable views on this subject may be found in Burnet's Preface to Pastoral Care. 'Recollect that it is possible to defend your own fort without storming another's battery. Maintain by scriptural argument your own principles and practices with modest confidence—but rail not ; insinuate no reflection on your opponents—name them not, unless with respect. Such was the wise advice of a Dissenting Minister of an eminently Christian spirit to his pupil. Jay's Life of Winter.

† See Mark ix. 38—40. Our Lord would not have his disciples forbid the man, but he did not imply that they should leave their own Master and follow him.

‡ " Order," combined with " steadfastness," formed the beauty of the Colossian church, and the ground of the apostle's joy on their account. Col. ii. 5.

§ Reformed Pastor. ‖ Matt. xiii. 25.

conviction, whether these victims of delusion had been invited, encouraged and cherished with parental confidence; and, while we were jealous of our Ministerial prerogative, whether we laid ourselves out to conciliate their affections, and to condescend to their infirmities. Some, indeed, after all, in the heat of their zeal, and the infancy of their understanding, "will turn away their ears from the truth, and be turned unto fables."* Concession to their conceits would bring woeful confusion among us. The most forward would become the governors of the church. One step yielded for peace would constrain us to advance, to the grievous discredit of our Ministry, the wounding of our conscience, and the dishonour of our Master's name. Baxter remarks—'A sinful humouring of rash professors is as great a temptation to godly Ministers, as a sinful compliance with the great ones of the world.'† Redoubled diligence in the spirit of simplicity and love is the Scriptural rule for these trying circumstances.

But apart from this factious and sectarian spirit, there is often a want of that 'mutual society, help and comfort, that Christians ought to have of each other, as members of one body, and which would promote the general interests of the Church, as well as a more lively, vigorous, and established enjoyment of Christian privileges.‡ Each, in this spirit, would impart to the other the support of brotherly help, counsel, and prayer; "looking not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others;" "bearing one another's burdens;" "the strong" especially

* 2 Tim. iv. 4.

† Cure of Church Divisions. Some valuable remarks will be found on this subject in Cecil's Life of Cadogan.

‡ Union of spirit was the apostle's great desire for the establishment of the church of Colosse. Col. ii. 1, 2.

"bearing the infirmities of the weak," and all in their several relations "receiving one another, as Christ also received them to the glory of God."*

The obligation to improve this mutual fellowship for mutual edification cannot be questioned. The Old Testament Saints evidently felt the duty and the privilege.† It was acknowledged in the primitive church.‡ The distribution of gifts and graces was for this purpose.§ Frequency and faithfulness in this duty (like mutual commerce between different countries) would enable Christians to enrich each other. Seduction and error would be more successfully resisted. If the enemy's watch-word is—'divide and conquer,'—ours should be—'Union is invincible.' The church is 'terrible,' not in its single members, but "as an army with banners."‖ Christian love would be much increased by frequent society with the design of mutual inspection and provocation.¶

The cultivation of the graces for mutual fellowship is of the highest importance; such as sobriety of judgment, lowliness of mind, readiness to acknowledge each other's gifts and grace—forbearance and encouragement to the young—Christian plainness and sincerity—a careful guard against a censorious or controversial spirit—anxiety to impart only what will tend to the advancement of holiness, Christian progress, and love.

Yet even in the primitive age of simplicity and godliness, a harvest of tares sprung up where better seed had been sown. "Spots there were in their feasts of charity,"** which made it too evident, that they

* Phil. ii. 4. Rom. xv. 1, 7.
† Ps. xxxiv. 2, 3. Ps. lxvi. 16. Mal. iii. 16.
‡ Acts. i. 42, 46. § 1 Pet. iv. 10. 1 Cor. xii. 7.
‖ Cant. vi. 10. ¶ Heb. x. 24. ** Jude 12.

"came together, not for the better, but for the worse." The recollection of this abuse even in the best times, seems strongly to suggest the importance of the balance of Ministerial superintendence, to maintain Christian godliness in connexion with Christian order, and to preserve brotherly love and unity on the solid basis of Christian humility. Mr. Robinson, one of the wisest experimentalists in an extensive parochial sphere, decidedly discountenanced the principle of unrestrained communication, from the first commencement of his Ministry at Leicester, and ultimately relinquished the plan of Christian conference, as being *under his circumstances* unnecessary and injudicious.*

The want however of Church communion operates as unfavourably upon our flocks in the mass, as the want of Christian communion upon them individually. But then, as the "communion of saints" is "the intercourse of Christians with each other, connected with Christ their Head; so is regular Church communion the interchange of sympathy among the several members, under the more or less immediate direction and influence of him who stands to them as in the place of their Head, "whose lips should keep knowledge," for the very purpose that "at his mouth they should seek the law, for he is the Messenger of the Lord of Hosts."†

Societies were organized after Dr. Woodward's pattern, and upon this principle of fostering control, by Mr. Walker of Truro, with admirable wisdom and satisfactory effect.‡ The objects however of these

* Vaughan's Life of Robinson, pp. 85—88. Comp. also Scott's Life, pp. 494—498.

† Mal. ii. 7.

‡ Mr. Walker's object appears to have been, to excite among the serious members of his congregation a particular interest in

associations (details of which are given below) being distinctly spiritual, it was evident, that they could only be preserved by the spirituality of the members under the prompt vigilance of the Director. Without this

each other's spiritual welfare, that they should watch over each other, exhort, reprove, encourage, as dear friends, as brethren and sisters in the faith of the Gospel. His plan was—a weekly meeting of those communicants, whose religious profession was considered undoubted. These he separated into two classes; one of unmarried men; another married men with their wives, and other females of the Society. They met alternately every other week. The whole society was under his own superintendence as director—regulating all their business (such as the admission and exclusion of members; making new rules, &c.) presiding in the weekly meetings, or prescribing for them a form of proceeding, when unavoidably absent. They began their meeting with a form of prayer, exhortation and singing. Connected with this, were smaller assemblies at their own houses in rotation, for more free and unreserved Christian communion, with the same separation of unmarried and married members. For the direction of these meetings, Mr. walker drew up most admirable regulations. The general objects of these Societies were described in Mr. Walker's first address, to be—1. To glorify God. 2 to be quickened and confirmed themselves. 3. To render them more useful among their neighbours. The members were pledged to exercise faithful superintendence over each other, to consider themselves each as "his brother's keeper," to be bound by the laws of charity not to "suffer sin upon each other," nor to allow it in themselves; to be strictly circumspect in their lives; separate from worldly customs and practices; walking in humility, meekness, heavenly mindedness, and love; and often considering it as a motive to holiness, that they belonged to a society for promoting the glory of God.

The rules of these Societies were formed upon high Christian principles. Their strict separation from worldly amusements was upon the ground of their being members of a crucified Saviour. Their watchfulness over each other was directed to spring from watchfulness over their own hearts, lest there should be 'the least decay of love to Christ, or of zeal for his honour and the good of souls' there. The obligation and privilege of mutual intercession was inculcated. They were warned against disgust at those, who exercised towards them the duty of Christian faithfulness and love. And in the remembrance, that their very fellowship with a Society professedly Christian, would tend to foster spiritual pride; exhortations to humility and self-abasement were strong and repeated. See the valuable Life of Mr. Walker, prefixed to his Lectures on the Catechism, pp. xxv—xlviii. Comp. also his excellent Collection of Tracts entitled 'Practical Christianity.'

constant security the form only would remain. Yet under Mr. Walker's wise and efficient care, the influence of these societies was maintained with much edification in a most important sphere, and even continued for many years after Mr. Walker's scriptural doctrines had, unhappily for the people, deserted the pulpit. Mr. Richmond also established an interesting Church meeting mainly upon this principle in his early Ministry.* Perhaps in some cases a more unformal plan might be desirable either for conciliation of mistaken prejudices, or the encouragement of a more unreserved communication of sentiment—such as the collection of small parties for the discussion of practical and experimental subjects, arising out of their own individual difficulties, or suggested from the impulse of their minds.† To invest this plan with the sacred

* The object of this meeting was large, social and edifying. It included the explanation o. the Scriptures, Prayer Book, and other useful books; friendly and Christian exhortation according to their circumstances; answering questions of scriptural or experimental difficulties; and uniting in prayer for a blessing upon themselves, their families, their neighbours, their country, and the whole Church of God throughout the world. See his Life, pp. 43, 44, note.

† When the Writer first suggested this plan, he was not aware that it had been practised among the Puritans. The plan of proceeding is in the life of Mr. Thomas Wilson—The question was given out, and answers were required; from whence a free and unreserved conversation appears to have arisen. As they spoke, the Minister would help, as he saw occasion, taking care to keep them in the path of the discussion, and to see that they kept within their bounds, not encroaching upon his office. At the conclusion of the conference, he gathered their scattered sentiments into an orderly method, confirmed and applied them by suitable Scriptures and remarks of his own, and thus rendered the meeting equally interesting and profitable to his flock. See Clark's Lives, Vol. iii. p. 33. His own Life prefixed, gives a statement of the advantages of these meetings, Pref. 4, 5. Interesting specimens may also be seen in Philip Henry's Life, pp. 41, 42, 349—351. His excellent son introduced them also into his congregation, as a means of Christian communion with his young

formality of a religious service, and at the same time to cast it as much as possible into a conversational mould, would open the best prospect of interest and edification. While the importance of acquainting each other with our difficulties and encouragements for the purposes of mutual support and consolation cannot be denied, yet to secure the advantages without the attendant temptations and inlets to evil, is a matter, which exercises the minds of many Ministers with considerable perplexity. Perhaps the junction of Ministerial control with Ministerial confidence offers upon the whole, the best mode of Christian edification. There is however, much valuable truth in a remark of a Puritan Minister on this subject—that '*Christian communion managed with prudence, is that which keeps our religion in breath, and without which it will be ready to die.*'

CHAPTER VII.

THE OFFICE AND USE OF HELPERS.

It was never intended, that the Minister should sustain the whole weight of the service of God. He cannot do every thing. Moses was assisted in his work by seventy elders, in tender consideration of his

people, himself always presiding. He appears to have had a similar meeting among the older members of his Church of a less restricted character. The interest that he felt in these meetings is proved by one of his prayers before the sacrament. 'That which I desire particularly to receive from the Lord at his table to-morrow, is wisdom for personal conference about matters of religion.' Life, pp. 134, 135. Mather also gives an interesting sketch.—Essays to do Good, pp. 87—91. Baxter remarks the necessity of social Christian meetings to preserve unity among our people, but seems to insist on the necessity of Ministerial control. Reformed Pastor.

overwhelming responsibility.* And thus the offices of "helpers" appears to have been of considerable service in promoting the efficiency of the Christian Ministry.† And this is one of the most important results of the pastoral work, that our constant communication with our people gains their confidence, and gives an insight into their individual characters, which enables us to employ them in subservient but most efficient parts of labour. Few departments, however, of our work require more of that "wisdom that is profitable to direct." The differences of administration in the present day, and the different temperament of the Church from the primitive times; the rise of a spirit of independency; the excitement of spiritual pride; the introduction of the baneful evil of "many masters;"‡ and the consequent diminution of the just influences of the Parochial head;—are temptations incident to this system, that will exercise unceasing watchfulness. But yet, with strict subordination to Ministerial control, and with an abundant share of humility and forbearance, room might readily be found for the active co-operation of lay-agency in various offices, defined by the local system, and portioned out according to the "diversities of gifts."

The various plans of the Ministerial economy for the good of the parish will always furnish a suitable sphere. The work of instruction in the Sunday School—the superintendence of adult schools—the management or promotion of religious societies—the diligent and sympathizing inquiry into the wants of the poor—the administering to their temporal necessities, and much more to their spiritual benefit—the visitation of the

* See Numb. xi. 10—25. † Rom. xvi. 9, 12. Phil. iv. 3.
‡ James iii. 1.

sick,—these, and similar plans, will furnish as much employment for the time of private Christians, as a conscientious regard to their secular calling will generally allow.

The duty of undertaking this office, with a due consideration of their private circumstances, should be inculcated upon every private Christian. The work of instruction belongs to Ministers primarily—not exclusively. They must be the movers and directors of the system, but not the sole agents. Their office is to set many lesser wheels in motion, in subservient harmony with the grand movements of the machine. Christians cannot seek their own edification too fervently, but they may be occupied in it too selfishly. Many appear to have no more interest or care for the unconverted around them, than if there were no such beings in the world. Or they are content to leave their souls to the superintendence of the Parish Minister, with the same indifference as they leave their bodies to the care of the Parish Apothecary. They are little aware of the loss which themselves, not less than the Church of God, suffer by this want of exertion. There is no better stimulant to personal religion than active devotedness to the spiritual wants of our fellow-sinners.

This will naturally lead us to remark, that the *personal advantages* of this service are of the highest importance. And with this view, and with a due regard to relative duties, (which must upon no account be superseded,) it is advisable to press this Christian responsibility upon those that are just commencing their Christian course. Such persons are apt to be absorbed in the new world of interest that surrounds them. They want to be drawn forth into the active habits of practical religion—to have their graces

exercised, their sympathies excited, their sense of obligation deepened, their view of the realities of the Gospel established, by a close contact with the spiritual distresses and supports of those around them. For some departments of this employ, Christian experience and Christian wisdom are materially requisite; and not less needed are the exercises of Christian patience, humility, earnestness, and love. But these are qualities that gather strength and maturity, by diligent and prayerful exercise. The plain duty and simple work of private instruction falls within the sphere of the lowest spiritual capacity. Nothing more is needed than an acquaintance with the value of the soul—the lost estate of man—the need of a Saviour—the power of his love—the work of his Spirit—the hope of his glory. These, when really felt, will be readily explained—not indeed with eloquence, or perhaps with systematic accuracy, but yet with that earnestness of simplicity, which characterizes the Gospel, honours God and is honoured of God. And it is this training in the exercises of Christian love and faithfulness, in the most limited range of the sphere, that qualifies the young helpers for a more extended and defined labour in the subordinate service of God. "He that is faithful in that which is least is faithful also in much."*

The *advantage also of this system to the Minister is of equal consideration.* It has been well observed—'Lay-agency is of incalculable moment. A Minister cannot undertake every thing himself. He must not fritter away his time. He must not widen too much his field of personal effort. He must concentrate, he must influence, he must be the centre to a hundred

* Luke xvi. 10.

hands and minds moving around him. This is more especially the case in populous places, where the actual efforts of any one or two Ministers would be lost in detail, and his public instructions would be hasty and undigested effusions, if he attempted individual instruction. Wisdom therefore must be exercised. Others must be set to work, and a machinery be erected, of which he takes only the general guidance.'* Indeed in what other mode can a Minister in an extended sphere acquit his own conscience of the responsible charge of thousands of perishing mortals, except he do *per alium* what it is impossible that he can do *per se*, and set in motion a machinery whose influence, directly emanating from himself, is felt in every part of his sphere. There are few Christian congregations in a large sphere, but would afford an organized system of helpers, to "supply" the Minister's necessary "lack of service on behalf of" his people. Let him only impress their minds with the love of Christ, and the love of souls, with a sense of their Christian responsibility flowing from these principles. Let him suggest the most suitable means of acting under a sense of their obligations. Let him from time to time direct, encourage, or control their operations. Let him excite them to take only one step towards the attainment of their object—to spread, if it were only a luminous spot, over their several districts—to be in constant motion, gradually proceeding in the system of regular distributiveness; and they will become most useful coadjutors in the Ministry of the Gospel. The system of leaving tracts judiciously selected by the Pastor, at the doors of the houses of their neighbourhood, and

* Prefatory Essay to Baxter's Reformed Pastor, by Rev. Daniel Wilson, p. xliv.

exchanging them periodically, has been found an important means of extending light, and exciting interest in many dark places of our land.*

* The System of District Societies appears to be making progress in some of our largest spheres, and under the sanction (especially in the Metropolis) of our highest Ecclesiastical authorities. It cannot be too strongly recommended, as the most likely means of effecting most extensive spiritual good among masses of immortal beings, that could not otherwise be reached. The nucleus of the system is a Christian congregation, and the strength of it—Christian Visitors, who will laboriously go through the work in all its duties of patience, compassion, and self-denial. The District Visiting Society in London has entered upon the work with a well-organized system of operation, and in a truly Christian spirit of perseverance. They thus forcibly state the necessity for their labours, in language equally applicable to other spheres that might be mentioned—'Some parishes have gradually become so thickly peopled, that an acquaintance, either personal or through the medium of his clerical assistants, with the majority of his parishioners, is beyond the reach of the most active and laborious incumbent. With the utmost zeal on his part, thousands may yet be left comparatively to themselves, without even the moral restraint, which in a smaller parish the frequent intercourse between the clergyman and his people often imposes on the most careless and unconcerned. Extensive districts are to be found, where a mass of ignorance, vice, and superstition is untouched, or nearly so, by the ordinary and prescribed means of preventing '*error in religion and viciousness in life.*' Their inhabitants live in the undisturbed practice of ungodliness, by the force of mutual example confirming each other in the disregard of every religious duty. Places of worship are unfrequented by them. They will not go in search of the means of spiritual instruction; these means must be brought home to them. If an impression is to be made, they must be invited, nay, "compelled" to attend to their eternal interests, by the earnest, persevering, long-suffering labours of individuals, willing to penetrate the abodes of misery and vice, to go from door to door, and to encounter frequent disappointment in their benevolent object.'

'The appointment of Visitors,' as the London Committee judiciously observe—is 'of the highest moment; they may be obtained from every rank of society and many of them will be Members of Local Committees. It is however essential, that they should be impressed with the importance of eternity—persons who earnestly desire that their fellow-creatures may walk in a right course, and who will interest themselves, not only in the relief of the body, but in the spiritual welfare of those whom they undertake to visit.

'In order that they may have time for the performance of such

Baxter wisely recommends us to make all possible use of the gifts of our people in an orderly way, and under our own superintendence, lest they should use

serious duties, care should be taken not to devolve too much upon one individual; in general from twenty to thirty families will be found sufficient for the most active Visitor, and for female Visitors a number still more limited may often be desirable. If however two Visitors act together, a course which will frequently be found expedient, particularly in their early labours, a large section may be allotted them.

'But there is no point which the Central Committee would more strongly urge on Local Committees, than that of confining their own and their Visitors' exertions within a practicable compass; a small space effectively visited is infinitely preferable, whether in reference to the good that is really done, or to the example which it affords, to a large district, only partially occupied.'

Their instructions to the Visitors are most admirable. 'You will visit the families comprised in your Section, as often as time and other circumstances may render expedient, with the view of promoting their temporal and spiritual improvement.—You will make it your first object, to gain their attention and secure their confidence, by convincing them that you are actuated solely by motives of Christian charity and kindness, and have no other end in view than their welfare.—Many topics of friendly conversation and enquiry will readily suggest themselves to you; and in the selection of these much will depend on your own good sense and discretion.'

'The Committee, however, would suggest the following hints:—

'1. Your first inquiries should relate to those subjects which afford the greatest interest to the poor; such as the number of which the family consists—the ages of the children—whether they attend any school, or can read—whether the family possesses a Bible or any other religious books; and, where you find a disposition to answer your inquiries, you will endeavour to ascertain whether the persons you visit attend Public Worship, and where —their occupation—means of subsistence—whether by parochial relief, by labour, charity, or otherwise—the period of their residence in the district—amount of rent paid—and manner of spending Sundays and leisure hours.—2. You will gently and prudently lead their attention to religious subjects, endeavouring to impress their minds with a sense of the importance of their immortal souls, and of the value of the Holy Scriptures, as a message of mercy from God to sinful man. You will urge on them the duty and privilege of observing the Sabbath, of prayer, and of attending Public Worship. You will point out to them as occasion may require, their relative duties, and avail yourself of suitable opportunities of reproving

them in a way of division against us. He remarks as one of the causes of schism—'a desire not to make use of the gifts that God hath given them for their

open vice. You will pay particular attention to the young, the sick and the aged. You will encourage parents to send their children to Day and Sunday Schools, and recommend grown-up persons, who cannot read, to attend adult evening schools. You will inform those who are without a Bible, how they may obtain one, and suggest weekly subscriptions for this purpose; and you will transmit their name and residence to the nearest Bible Association, or to the Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge. —3. It will be necessary that you should be provided with information as to the Places of Worship, Adult, Day, Sunday, and Infant Schools, in the neighbourhood; and where there is any obstacle to the attendance of the persons you visit, from want of accommodation or distance, you will make this circumstance known to the Local Committee of the District.—4. You will not fail to inculcate habits of industry, and cleanliness, both of rooms and persons. Where practicable, employment should be suggested to persons out of work, and in many cases it will be desirable to point out the advantages of Saving Banks, and encourage weekly deposits for rent.—5. In cases of sickness and want, you will endeavour to ascertain whether there is any medical or other attendance, whether relief is afforded by any benevolent society, and what charitable assistance is required.—6. The Committee recommend that relief should be administered (where practicable) through the medium of some existing Society or Institution, and it will be very desirable that the Visitors should be provided with recommendations of subscribers to such Societies and to the nearest Dispensary, to be used as occasion may require.—7. It may in some cases be advisable to release the tools and clothes of mechanics from pawn; but except in instances of pressing and immediate want, it is strongly recommended that no pecuniary aid be afforded from the funds of the Society, before the case has been submitted to the Local Committee —8. It will be necessary to bear in mind the prevalence of fraud and imposture; and it is hoped that the frequency of your visits will gradually facilitate their detection. While you will avoid all appearance of harshness or want of feeling for the misery which meets your notice, you will use every precaution to guard against the misapplication of charitable aid upon objects of merely pretended distress, or upon those who are receiving adequate relief from other sources.—9. You will avoid as far as possible encroaching on the necessary occupations of families and individuals; and with this view it will be very important that you should ascertain the time when visits are most acceptable, and put persons the least out of their way.—10. You will not attempt to force yourselves on those who show a determined aversion to

assistance;'—and adds, 'I am persuaded, if Ministers had thus made use of the parts of their ablest members, they might have prevented much of the divisions, and distractions and apostacies that hath befallen us, for they would then have found work enough upon their hands for higher parts than theirs, without invading the Ministry. Experience would have convinced and humbled them more than our words can do. A man may think that he can stir up a block or pluck up a tree by the roots that never tried; but when he sets his hand to it, he will come off ashamed. And see that you drive them to diligence in their own works, and let them know what a sin it is to neglect their own families, and their ignorant miserable neighbours; and then they will be kept humble, and have no such mind to be running upon more work, when they feel you spurring them on to their own, and rebuking them for the neglect; nor will they have any leisure for schismatical enterprises, because of the constancy and greatness of their employment.'*

It must however be remembered, that *helpers are not*

your visits, but you will express to them in a friendly manner, your readiness to call upon them again, should they become more disposed to receive you—11. It will generally be desirable that the Visitors should go two and two, although they may frequently be engaged at the same time with different families under the same roof.—12. You will be provided with a journal in which you will enter the name, residence, &c. of the persons visited, with answers to certain queries suggested; which should be submitted to the Local Committee of your district, at each meeting, accompanied with a notice of any particular occurrences tending to illustrate character, show improvement, call for particular advice, &c.; and with such general observations on the state of your Section as may appear useful.—13. The Committee would only further intreat you to remember the Master whom you serve; and in cases of opposition or insult, to govern your temper—to return good for evil—blessing for cursing—to be patient towards all men, in meekness instructing those who oppose themselves.'

* Conclusion of Reformed Pastor.

Ministers. They may speak with exhortation, intreaty, and love, but not with authority. Their work should assume the character rather of brotherly admonition than of fatherly teaching. They have no special commission intrusted to them. They must "speak as the oracles of God, and as of the ability which God giveth;"* but they cannot speak as ambassadors for Christ. They may speak in his name (that is, in dependance upon him as their Head) but not in his stead—not as having a message and commission from him. They need at once to be excited, directed, and controlled; and under this discipline we may cherish the "hope, when their faith is increased, that we shall be enlarged by them according to our rule abundantly."† They will indeed be to us, "instead of eyes"‡—their "work and labour of love" will act with considerable power, as one of the wheels in the great machine of perpetual motion; and their reward of grace will be with "Urbane and the beloved Persis,"—with "Clement and with other fellow-labourers, whose names are in the book of life."§

But we must not forget that the meanest member of the church sustains this useful character of a helper by his example; the power of which is sometimes even more forcible than the pulpit Ministry.‖ The holiness of our people is indeed a visible "seal of our Apostleship," which none can gainsay or resist. As confirming every word of instruction, invitation, and encouragement—as exhibiting the identity of the strait ways of the Gospel with the "paths of pleasantness and peace;" this testimony is above all price.

Least of all must we forget (though it has been before alluded to) the help which is derived to the Min-

* 1 Pet. iv. 11. † 2 Cor. x. 16. ‡ Numb. x. 31.
§ Rom. xvi. 9, 12. Phil. iv. 3. ‖ See 1 Pet. iii. 1, 2.

istry from the prayers of our people. So sensible was the Apostle of the value of this help, that distinguished as he was for eminence of grace, experience, and services, he pleads for it with the earnestness of a beggar requesting alms.* Bishop Davenant traces the allowance of so many ignorant Ministers in the Church to the want of hearty supplication.† And indeed a praying people will be sure eventually to be blessed with a thriving Ministry. We are far more in the power of our people than we are at all times conscious of. Humanly speaking—our personal graces—the spiritual character of our Ministrations—and the consequent flow of consolation and fruitfulness with our people, very materially depend upon their secret labours on our behalf. We are the conduits of grace, by which the Church is refreshed. The Church therefore must pray for the continual supplies to be poured into the conduits, or they will return (like the nobles of Judah) "with their vessels empty, ashamed, and confounded, and covering their heads."‡ If, therefore, a blessing is expected through the instrumentality of the Ministry, it must be sought in this way—"ye also helping together in prayer to God for us, that for the gift bestowed upon us by the means of many persons, thanks may be given by many on our behalf."§ And never will prayer be sent up for a blessing upon the Minister, which will not return with tenfold blessing upon the supplicant's head.‖

* See Rom. xv. 30.
† Daven. in Col. iv. 3.
‡ Jer. xiv. 3.
§ 2 Cor. i. 11.
‖ Specific remembrance of the Minister in secret and social worship, on the mornings of the Sabbaths especially (not of course forgetting his daily claim upon their remembrance) might be inculcated with the greatest, though perhaps unconscious advantage to ourselves and to our Ministry.

At all events, therefore, let the fallacy of the indolent notion be exposed, that Ministers are to do every thing. Let all our people be reminded of the immense burden of our work: "besides" the trials of the Christian life, "that which cometh upon us daily—the care of all the Churches."* If then they can do any thing, let them help us in winning souls to Christ. Let them be won themselves to him. Let them spread the influence of the sacred leaven around them, "till the whole be leavened." Let them know our great need of their prayers and example to confirm our doctrine, so that, while it is perverted, misunderstood, or opposed on all sides, we may be able to point to their lives and tempers in illustration of its holy tendency and happy effects—"ye are our epistle, known and read of all men—manifestly declared to be the epistle of Christ, ministered by us."†

CHAPTER VIII.

MISCELLANEOUS.

A FEW particulars, which have not hitherto found a place in our work, may be here specified, such as—*The importance of adult schools.* These are indeed the complement of the School System. It is difficult to retain boys in the weekly school long enough to ground them in the principles of useful instruction.

* 2 Cor. xi. 28. "Cometh upon me"—rushing like a torrent, one after another, ready to bear me down. For the illustration of the peculiar emphasis of the term, Beza and Doddridge may be consulted, or perhaps a better commentator than either, at particular seasons of trial—*experience.*

† 2 Cor. iii. 2, 3.

The Sunday School also is left without any other means of preserving the knowledge which they have acquired. The utility of adult schools—as continuing indefinitely the course of instruction—is of the highest consideration. The knowledge of the word of God is also equally valuable to adults as to children. Their capacity of understanding it is far greater—though much hindered by inability to read. Shame indeed will sometimes restrain the open confession of ignorance in stooping to the first elements of instruction; yet on the other hand, experience even of the temporal disadvantages of ignorance (where the spiritual deprivations are not apprehended) supplies a constant stimulus for exertion. The smallness of numbers need not operate as a discouragement. In a village it will often be found, that but few will avail themselves of the privileges of instruction. But an assembly of three or four is well worth regular attention. It is a great matter to persuade a man in the middle or decline of life, that in commencing his alphabet, he may be able by a few months of patient application to read his Testament. When sufficient numbers are collected to form into classes—the lads and the adults should, as far as possible, be separated. The Testament lessons will furnish an interesting course of questioning; and even the earlier lessons, drawn from the most simple contents of the sacred volume, will be replete with personal application. The office of Helpers may be called into exercise in this department, with much relief to the Minister, and no small advantage to his fellow-workers. Where confidence has been gained, and opportunities are favourable, a class might be formed on the Sunday for more direct instruction, either between the hours of service, or at any more convenient

time of the day. The opportunities thus afforded for spiritual instruction—the employment furnished for the leisure hour, (which otherwise might have been spent in idleness or sin,) and the beneficial results pervading the domestic economy from a more intelligent acquaintance with their duties and obligations, render this system peculiarly important. The general success (much facilitated by works expressly written for this purpose)* is highly encouraging; especially where the love of the sacred volume is the principle of perseverance. Many, whose scanty knowledge of its contents has flowed from the uncertain kindness of others, have thus been enabled to exercise themselves with most grateful delight and improvement in an immediate access to this unsearchable treasure.

A parochial library, where practicable, is an important appendage to the Pastoral system. The capacity of reading communicated to old and young, lays upon us a weighty responsibility. Sound principle and Christian influence are especially needed to give a right direction to this new medium of intelligence, which otherwise will become a channel of vain curiosity and idleness—probably also of infidelity and sin—a field for the activity of Satan instead of a blessing to our people. 'But,' as Mr. Newton observed—'One proposes to fill a bushel with *tares*; now, if I can fill it first with wheat, I shall defy his attempts.' A store therefore of valuable instruction, adapted to the different gradations of intelligence and religious impressions, would be extensively useful, as a preservative from poisonous influence, and an excitement of interest and

* The British Adult Spelling Book, sold by Mason, Paternoster Row—from its excellent type, and admirable selection of Scripture Lessons—will answer all the desired purposes.

mutual confidence. With the admission of a few works of general information, the complexion of the library should however be distinctly evangelical, practical, and popular—formed upon the basis of the Divine aphorism—"One thing is needful."* A payment of a penny, or at most of two pence, a quarter, would not be felt by the poorest of our people, while it would give them a sort of interesting property in it, and accumulates a trifling fund for fresh additions to the catalogue, which should be widely made known. A leger should be kept for the entry of the names of the books and subscribers, and of the period when their subscriptions become due, or are paid. The times of exchange and distribution, and the limit of the detention of the books, should be definitely fixed, and strictly observed. Objections might be made to Sunday as one of these times; as, besides the time that would be employed in the arrangements of distribution, it would be the means of circulating works of too light a cast for the spiritual edification of the Sabbath, and others, excellent in their kind, but decidedly opposed to the sacredness of that holy day. The books, if well covered with brown paper, will sustain for a considerable time the rough handling to which they will be exposed, at the same time that a forfeit should be exacted for injury or loss, as well as for unreasonable detention beyond the fixed bounds.

The advantages also of Cottage Readings must not be omitted in this detail. Our Lord's public Ministry extended beyond the precincts of the synagogue, to every concourse of people. In strict conformity therefore with the spirit of this example, we cannot but

* Bickersteth's Christian Student (ch. xv.) will furnish a valuable selection for this purpose.

suggest the importance of improving familiar opportunities for collective instruction of our people. In every parish there are many, who from bodily infirmity or from other causes, are without the sphere of the pulpit Ministry, and who need therefore not merely general or individual conversations upon spiritual subjects, but distinct expositions of the word of God as the appointed light and food of their souls. Besides that this plan is useful to the poor generally, as enabling us to give those free and popular expositions, which perhaps are not quite consistent with the dignity of the pulpit, and yet which are absolutely necessary to convey correct views of truth to the uninstructed mind. 'No one,' (as has been justly observed by a most competent judge) 'but those accustomed to question the poor, or to be questioned by them, can form an idea of what by way of explanation they require. It is not only "line upon line, and precept upon precept" they need, but it is almost word by word, and letter by letter.'* This mode of instruction will admit of considerable diversity of application. In an advanced state of knowledge or mutual confidence, the catechetical mode has been applied with much interest and edification. In a less matured state, a spirit of inquiry and excitement has been maintained by exercises in the Scripture field—proposing subjects for successive readings, and illustrating them by Scripture parallels. In more ordinary cases, familiar reading and exposition of a course of Scripture (perhaps preferable to unconnected portions), commenced and concluded with prayer, will furnish the plan and fill up the outlines. The evenings only allow the attendance of men upon these meetings. Women (except in the manufacturing districts) may be

* Parochial Duties illustrated, pp. 16, 17.

collected during the day. The time, however, should be fixed with all possible consideration of convenience, and should be considered on our part as an engagement of regular occurrence and of paramount obligation. This economical system concentrates a large portion of our parochial visitation, while its orderly formality shuts out many interruptions which belong to domiciliary visits. Care however must be taken, that attendance upon these readings does not compensate for the self-indulgent neglect of the house of God—instead of setting an edge upon the appetite for the Sabbath Ministrations. Frequently however a peculiar blessing has attended these simple assemblies of the poor, which perhaps from their freedom and confidence, may be considered an oppropriate work and labour of love for the Minister's wife.

As the last particular in this lengthened detail, may be mentioned *the excitement of an interest in the promotion of the Redeemer's kingdom*, as collaterally helpful to our work. Missionary and Bible Associations, especially the former, deal much in affecting and encouraging facts, though in the latter case it too frequently happens (unless the claims of the heathen are strongly pressed) that the subscription proceeds no further than the purchase of a good Bible at a cheap cost. The principles upon which these associations are formed are—the imparting of interesting information, and the inculcation of evangelical motives. For the former, the monthly publications of the Societies will furnish ample materials. The latter will be drawn in rich abundance from the word of God. The positive command of Christ*—his dying love—the value of the soul—the nearness of eternity—the "sure word of proph-

* Mark xvi. 15.

ecy," as indicative of the purposes of God respecting his church—and the high privilege of being "fellow-workers with him"—all will combine to work with powerful constraint. The regularity of system should be introduced as far as possible into these Associations, especially in the collecting department, which should be managed weekly, where circumstances allow of it, and used as a medium of distributing information, and maintaining the tone of interest, as well as of gathering the contributions.* Monthly meetings must be considered an important component part of the system. Singing, prayer, select reading from the most interesting sources of information—personal application and excitement grounded upon it—concluding with Scripture reading or exposition, and prayer, will form an assembly of our people, with much parochial interest and effect, as well as with effective influence upon the general cause of Christ.†

In these institutions the elements of vital religion are cherished in the subjugation of the natural principle of selfishness to that "charity that seeketh not her own;" in the awakening of a spirit of self-denial, pity, and intercession; and in a deepened sense of privileges, obligations, and responsibilities; so that the offering cast into the sacred treasury (though by no means to be despised) constitutes but a small portion of the

* The Writer heard of a Collector who gave a most satisfactory explanation of the interest and success of her employment—ascribing it to her conscientious adherence to two rules—regularity of collecting, and commencing her work periodically in prayer—the one marking the mechanism of the system, the other forming the living principle of the work.

† For a beautiful specimen of meetings for these purposes, long before they were known among us, see Memoirs of Oberlin, pp. 178, 179, lately published,—a most interesting sketch of Pastoral Biography.

benefit derived: and thus the endeavour to diffuse the Gospel abroad is closely connected with its enlarged influence within our own spheres.

In concluding this extended survey, the Writer would express his strong conviction, that the full exhibition of a Scriptural Ministry, combined with diligent labour in the Pastoral department, is the medium, through which the Spirit of God will produce among us an extension of true religion, which for explicitness, durability and consistency, will abide the day of trial, and cause even the enemies of the Gospel to "see, and know, and consider, and understand together, that the hand of the Lord hath done this, and that the Holy One of Israel hath created it."*

It is not, however, an exclusive interest in any department that is desirable, but a concentrated attention to all. Whosoever, (to apply our Saviour's words,†) shall neglect one of the least ordinances of the sacred office "shall be called least in the kingdom of heaven." We must be careful, however, not to attempt too many plans at once—not more than we have a reasonable hope of sustaining, and especially not more than is consistent with a primary reference to our personal communion with God, and preparation for our public work. Yet by regularity, doing one thing at a time, allowing a pause, by short exercises, and by such prudence as is consistent with zeal, (not letting a variety of exercises carry us beyond our strength,) much more may be done than is commonly imagined.

ΕΝ ΤΟΥΤΟΙΣ ΙΣΘΙ.—1 Tim. iv. 15.

* Isaiah xli. 20. † Matt. v. 19.

PART VI.

RECOLLECTIONS OF THE CHRISTIAN MINISTRY.

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It may be profitable to shut up this immensely momentous and interesting subject, with an attempt to recall a few of the exercises of our mind, and to concentrate them in some fixed and permanent impressions. Just and elevated views of our office, habitually realized, are most conducive to our Ministerial proficiency. They tend at once to excite, support, and direct us in our work. It is possible that the detailed view, which has been exhibited of our high responsibilities, may have alternately operated in discouragement or in sustaining consolation. Yet we are persuaded, that, though partial views of the Christian Ministry may, by eclipsing the prospects of faith, make the "hands hang down" in the work, the sober calculation, and the extended observation of faith will substantiate before us the full support of the Gospel—such as will draw forth the expression of our present gratitude, and result in continued and fresh excitement in the world of everlasting praise.*

But that we may maintain our apprehensions of the work in practical and abiding influence—the Writer would expand a few questions, which the course of this survey has suggested for his own conviction, and which

* The writer is happy to recommend in this place an interesting and valuable compilation—'The Christian Minister's Pocket Companion, by Rev. W. Shuttleworth.' (Holdsworth and Ball.)

he would respectfully submit for the consideration of his honoured and beloved brethren.

I. *Do we honour our work?* The deepest spirit of personal humiliation well consists with elevated views of the sacred function;* and it is then, that we "magnify our office," when Christ is the central doctrine, and inspiring principle of our Ministrations, and we cover ourselves to exhibit his glory.† 'Let Jesus Christ,' said the excellent Matthew Henry, 'be all in all. Study Christ—preach Christ—live Christ.'‡ 'It was said of Ignatius, that he carried Christ about with him in his heart, and this I will say—if to represent a glorious Christ to the view, the love, and the admiration of all people, be the grand intention of your life—if you are exquisitely studious that the holiness and yet the gentleness of a glorious Christ may shine in your conversation—if in your public discourses you do with rapture bring in the mention of a glorious Christ in every paragraph, and on every occasion where he is to be spoken of—and if in your private conversation you contrive to insinuate something of his glories and praises, whenever it may be decently introduced—finally, if when you find that a glorious Christ is the more considered and acknowledged by your means, you exclaim —"Lord! this is my desired happiness'—truly you then live to good purpose.'§

We magnify our office also by an *exhibition of the spirit of our commission.* The dignity and glory of the Christian Ministry, mainly consists in the personal exhibition of the graces and holiness of our Divine

* Comp. Eph. iii. 8. Rom. xi. 13. † See John iii. 30.
‡ Life, p. 122. Compare sermon on John xiv. i. Miscel. Works. pp. 581—583.
§ Mather's Essays to do Good, pp. 113, 114.

Master before the church. "In all things approving ourselves as the Ministers of God,"*—having our souls animated, and excited, filled with our work—making it the one absorbing concern—feeling the insignificance of every thing in comparison with it—giving it the lead in every pursuit—lending to it our care and indulgence —concentrating upon it the best and most steady efforts of self-denial and love—and manifesting that sympathising tenderness of heart, which bespeaks a sense of its responsibility. Such was George Herbert's spirit, when dissuaded from the Ministry, as from a mean employment, below his birth—'Though the iniquity of the times has made the sacred name of priest contemptible, yet I will labour to make it honourable, by consecrating all my learning, and all my poor abilities, to advance the glory of that God that gave them.'† Such also was Henry Martyn's spirit of holy abasement and exultation. 'Blessed be God,' said he, '*I feel myself to be his Minister.*'

II. *Do we feel the responsibility of our work?* An affecting, though not an overwhelming conviction of the dignity and difficulty of the work, is eminently serviceable to check a vain, indolent, and careless mind —to prepare us for the improvement of all necessary

* 2 Cor. vi. 4. The following lines exhibit the primitive simplicity of their well known Author.

'Give me the priest these graces shall possess—
Of an ambassador the first address—
A father's tenderness—a shepherd's care—
A leader's courage which the cross can bear—
A ruler's awe—a watchman's wakeful eye—
A pilot's skill, the helm in storms to ply—
A fisher's patience—and a labourer's toil—
A guide's dexterity, to disembroil—
A prophet's inspiration from above—
A teacher's knowledge—and a Saviour's love.

BISHOP KENN.

† Walton's Life of Herbert.

gifts and graces—to call forth earnest supplications *in a* matter so plainly above human strength—to exercise our entire dependence on Christ for guidance, assistance, and success—to preserve us against impertinent diversions from our work—and to make us deeply solicitous about its success. Nor is it less important as a ground of encouragement in our work—'as arguing high thoughts of our God and Master—a firm belief of the truth and weight of our message—a freedom from secular ends, a humble, serious, tender, and prepared heart, a readiness to acknowledge our deficiencies, to improve our helps, to be earnest in prayer, to wait in expectation of Divine influence, to watch against all dindrances, and to render to God the honour of all the success—and even of all due preparation and diligence.

May we not then inquire—What is our personal sympathy with this awful sense of responsibility? How are we affected by the Scriptural warnings—enough to "make both the ears of every" watchman "that heareth them to tingle?"*—How by the spirit of our Ordination service? than which—as Bishop Burnet justly remarks—'nothing in any office is so serious and so solemn,'†—as exhibiting us in both parts of our weighty business—as the mouth of God to the people, and the mouth of the people to God. Do we feel this *responsibility in regard to our care and diligence!* Is not Ministerial diligence as necessary for our salvation as Christian diligence for our people? The most regular course of external service or irreproachable conduct

* Ezek. iii. xxxiii. xxxiv. Zech. xi. 17.

† Past. Care, ch. vi. Comp. Bishop Porteus's Charges, 1790. Comber mentions a prayer for a Minister in an old Gallican form of ordination—'that he may tremble for all the people committed to his care, remembering that all their souls are to be required at the watchman's hand.'

will not meet the emergency, without a deep sense of the "necessity laid upon us." The ransom found for immortal souls shows at once their infinite value and responsibility. What could only be purchased by the blood of the Son of God must be worth the labour of all the Ministers in the church. Nor can the murder of a fellow-creature bear any comparison with "the voice of the blood" of our brother's soul "crying" for vengeance "from the ground." What fervent exercises of Christian sympathy—perhaps the strongest evidences of our Ministerial call—flow from this source! Mr. Brown was often deprived of a night's rest by his tender and oppressive anxiety;* and, did young Ministers cherish this impression of their office, they would have deeper views of their awful engagements; and, instead of desiring extensive spheres of service, they would be more sensible of the solemn charge of a single soul.†

How do we feel *with regard to our talents?* They were given to us on account, neither to waste on sin, nor to slumber in indolence, nor to concentrate in selfishness—but to occupy in our Master's service for the benefit of our people.‡ Are our "gifts stirred up," our graces exercised—our opportunities improved to the uttermost?

How again do we feel *with regard to our preaching?*

* Life and Remains, p. 28. 'When a man is sensibly affected with the value of souls, with the manner of their redemption, and with the price paid for them, and is well acquainted with the New Testament, in which all this is plainly set forth; as he will never want matter for the best sermons, so he will never want arguments sufficient to convince his hearers of his own heart being touched with the importance of the subject.' Bishop Wilson's Parochialia.

† Bishop Andrews engraved on his episcopal seal the memorable words—"Who is sufficient for these things?"

‡ Luke xix. 13—26.

Do we realize the responsibility of the real character of our office—as, not the magistrate—the statesman—the legislator—the wise or prudent man—the moralist—the poet—the man of feeling—or even the minister of the law—but the ambassador of Christ, 'sent to man the sinner—not the partial, but the total sinner—not the impoverished, but the ruined—not to man hurt by sin, but to man dead in sin—not man to be repaired, but to be made—not to be rectified, but to be created?' How important is the recollection, that we bring to man nothing that is truly valuable, without an acquaintance with his true character, his lost condition, and his only solid hopes for eternity!

How *does our example speak*—a most responsible part of our office? 'What Bishop' or Minister 'can forbear trembling, seeing himself engaged by Jesus Christ himself to be like an "*angel*" pure, spiritual, *in* a constant application to men by labour, and to God by prayer—and like a "star" full of light, elevated above the earth, fixed to his sphere which is his "church," incessantly moving in it, and continually diffusing his influences below.'* Do we realize the responsibility of our office as "the salt of the earth?"† Alas! sometimes do we not rather seem to assist the putrefaction than preserve from it? Do we consider the delicate exact attention belonging to our function—like the female character, requiring not only restraint

* Quesnel on Rev. i. 19, 20. 'Vouchsafe, Lord,' adds this pious expositor, 'to send such "angels," and cause such "stars" as these to shine in thy church.' 'So holy is our employment, that, were our souls as pure as cherubs, as zealous and active as the blessed spirits that are above, we should yet have reason to cover our faces, and to be swallowed up in a deep sense of our own insufficiency for these things.'—Scougal's Sermon on the Importance and Difficulty of the Ministerial Function.

† Matt. v. 13.

within the strict bounds of propriety, but the most remote distance from the bounds even of suspicion—a restriction, which however burdensome it may appear, is a most important obligation and effectual support to the main designs of the Ministry?

The responsibility of the temporal concerns of the nation, bears no proportion to the tremendous weight of the charge of immortal souls. Ministers are not "visited after the visitation of all men." Nothing is distributed to them upon the common scale of calculation—or according to the general balance of the Divine dispensations. "We are," says the Apostle, "made a spectacle to the world, and to angels, and to men."* We cannot singly ruin or save ourselves.—What means then the frequent caution or charge of excessive zeal, when our own consciences must tell us, that—did we but realize the value of the soul—were we suitably impressed with the love of the Saviour or with a sense of our obligations—we should not minister as we do—that we have reason to be ashamed of every sermon we preach—and perhaps to tremble in the very best of them, lest we be charged with slighting the truth of God—and with the guilt of the blood of our people. How solemn the peal which the passing bell—that useful memento of mortality—rings in our ears! Another account is carried in before the bar of our Judge—an account linked with our own, and crowded with sins of Ministerial omission and unfaithfulness! Can we forbear the impassioned deprecation of guilt—"Deliver me from blood-guiltiness, O God!"† Can we forget

* 1 Cor. iv. 9.

† Psalm li. 14. Chrysostom's words on this subject, Scougal declares, 'are so terrible that I tremble to put them into English; and yet'—adds he with deep toned impressiveness, 'if a man should speak fire, blood, and smoke, if flames could come out of

that the minister is the man of all others, who needs the superabounding mercy of God! Do we not a little understand the thrice-repeated flight of Ambrose from the Episcopate—the compulsory ordination of Gregory Nazianzen—the deprecation of the Apostolic Bishop of Hippo—(Quid! vultis ut peream?) and the deep distress of Chrysostom, counting his elevation a judgment upon the Church?*—If there was a mixture of superstition with this shrinking humility—"forgive them this wrong;" and let us condescend to learn something of them, which they are well able to teach—to temper our more enlightened views of faith with a portion of that "weakness and fear and much trembling,"† which they so vividly pourtrayed.‡"

his mouth instead of words, if he had a voice like thunder, and an eye like lightning, he could not sufficiently represent the *dreadful* account that an unfaithful pastor shall make.' Scougal's Sermon, ut supra, also some striking thoughts in Dwight's Sermons, Vol. ii 444.

* 'In the first and most blessed times of Christianity, those only were judged worthy of the Ministry, whose quiet and meek spirit did make them look upon that sacred calling with an humble adoration, and fear to undertake it; which indeed requires such great degrees of humility, and labour, and care, that none but such were then thought worthy of that celestial dignity, and such only were then sought out and solicited to undertake it. Walton's Life of Donne. † 1 Cor. ii. 3, with 2 Cor. xii. 9.

‡ The celebrated Rutherford, when petitioning the assembly against his removal from Anworth, the beloved sphere of his parochial labours, to the Divinity chair, used as one plea—Let it be considered, if one, who dare not be able to answer to Christ for a lesser charge, should be burdened with a more weighty. Murray's Life of Rutherford, p. 152.

Leighton tells us of one reason for his resignation of the see of Glasgow—'The sense I have of the dreadful weight of whatsoever charge of souls, and all kind of spiritual inspection over all people, but much more over ministers; and there is,' added he 'an episcopal act, that is above all others formidable to me—*ordaining ministers.*' The anxiety of sleepless nights seems to be implied in the Apostle's emphatic term ἀγρυπνῶν (Heb. xiii. 17.) Were not the Apostle's "watchings often" (ἐν ἀγρυπνίαις 2 Cor. vi. 5,) probably connected with the deep intensity of his Ministerial anxiety?

III. *Do we earnestly desire and expect success in our work?* There can scarcely be any hope of success without a deep and anxious concern for it. 'If you would prosper in your work,' says Baxter, 'be sure to keep up earnest desires and expectations of success. If your heart be not set upon the end of your labours, and you long not to see the conversion and edification of your hearers, and do not study and preach in this hope, you are not likely to see much fruit of it.'* "The ostrich," indeed "leaveth her eggs in the earth," careless what may befal them, "because God hath deprived her of wisdom, neither hath he imparted unto her understanding."† But what husbandman would sow the seed without some anxiety and expectation of the harvest? And who can help admiring the conduct of faithful Eliezer, who would neither eat nor drink, until he saw how his master's business would speed?‡ But how often are we satisfied with a creditable performance of our duties, without a deep concern for the success of our work, and yearning compassion for the multitudes hardening themselves under the sound of the Gospel!§ To aim intensely and simply at one main object, to count every soul a kingdom, and to be more delighted to save a soul than to win a crown—this is the true spirit of the Ministry. This was the spirit of our great Master—the satisfaction he anticipated from the travail of his soul"—"the joy that was set before him."‖ This was the sustaining desire

* Reformed Pastor and his Life of Alleine.

† Job xxxix. 14—17. with John x. 12, 13.

‡ Gen. xxiv. 33.

§ Mr. Ottee, ejected from Beccles, Suffolk, if he preached five or six sermons without hearing of any good effect upon some or other of his hearers, was greatly dejected, and very fervent in prayer for further success.

‖ Isa. liii. 11. Heb. xii. 2.

of the Apostle under his wearisome labours.* Oh! then let us thirst insatiably for the salvation of souls.† We must be utterly dead to any high sense of our calling, if we can roll along a course of years in the responsible relation of Pastor, without inquiry or concern whether our people thrive or decline under our Ministry. Let us not be satisfied with any thing short of real fruit. Some outward restraint or reformation may be wrought—but while the heart is uninfluenced, the principle of sin remains in full vigour, and no real or permanent advantage is gained. "The axe is" not

* See Rom. 1. 13.

† Bishop Patrick informs us, in his interesting account of the learned John Smith—'that he had resolved (as he one day told me) very much to lay aside other studies, and to *travail in the salvation of men's souls*, after whose good he most earnestly thirsted.' Alleine 'was infinitely and insatiably greedy of the conversion of souls: and to this end he poured out his very heart in prayer and in preaching. He imparted not the gospel of God only, but his own soul. His supplications and his exhortations many times were so affectionate, so full of holy zeal, life, and vigour, that they quite overcame his hearers. He melted over them, so that he mollified, and sometimes dissolved the hardest hearts.' Mr. Ward of Ipswich, an eminent puritan divine, asks—'If God were to say to a Minister, as he said to Solomon—"Ask what I shall give thee?"—what should he desire, either before or more than this—namely, a large portion of that magnetical virtue whereby Peter and Paul, and other primitive preachers, drew many thousand souls to the knowledge of Jesus?' 'In my preaching,' said the celebrated Bunyan, 'I could not be satisfied, unless some fruits did appear in my work. If I were fruitless, it mattered not who commended me: but if I were fruitful, I cared not, who did condemn.' 'I would think it a greater happiness,' said Matthew Henry, in the view of his ordination, 'to gain one soul to Christ, than mountains of silver and gold to myself;' adding, in his *dread of the misery of ministerial unfruitfulness*, 'If God suffers me to labour in vain (though I *should get hundreds a year by my labour*), it would be the constant grief and trouble of my soul; and if I do not gain souls, I shall enjoy all my other gains with very little satisfaction,' and '*I would rather beg my bread from door to door than undertake this great work.* Dr. Doddridge wrote thus to a friend—'I long for the conversion of souls more sensibly than for any thing besides. Methinks I could not only labour, but die for it with pleasure—The love of Christ constraineth me.'

"laid to the root of the tree." The branches only are lopped off, and pruned for greater luxuriance, though perhaps in some varied forms. The fountain is not dried up, only the course of the waters is diverted into another channel. The *main design* therefore of the Ministry is left unaccomplished. One soul converted to God is better than thousands merely moralized, and still sleeping on in their sins. The object as well as the recompense of our work is to have fellowship with the angels in "gathering together the elect of God."*

Nor must we tamely acquiesce in the admission of Ministerial success being not always visible,† or too indulgently console ourselves in the assurance of personal acceptance, in the event of a total failure. For though the reward is measured by labour, not by success; and is still "with our God, though Israel be not gathered;"‡ yet the promises pleaded and waited for, in the diligence and perseverance of faith, warrant the expectation of a *measure of apparent fruit.* Mr. Robinson well said to his brethren—'Search, ask if there be a cause, when your seals are not broad and visible'§—otherwise acquiescence will prove to be rather the slumber of indolence, than the quietness and resignation of faith. The Divine Sovereignty must indeed be fully acknowledged, but not pleaded in excuse for

* Matt. xxiv. 31. † See Part ii. ch. 1.

‡ See 1 Cor. iii. 8. Isa. xlix. 4, 5.

§ Visitation Sermon, pp. 36, 37. Most admirably Mr. Scott remarks—'When a man is in earnest, nothing will satisfy him but this. Others may be satisfied without success; they may go through a formal set of observances, and be contented, instead of examining their Ministry, and saying—"Show me wherefore thou contendest with me." If any thing but usefulness will satisfy us, I do not wonder that we are not useful. We must thank God for this and that thing, but nothing must satisfy us but the conversion of sinners. The least success in our profession is better than the greatest in any other.—Sermon on Rom. xv. 29.

inertion ; not rested upon, except as a sustaining encouragement in conflict and difficulty. The apostles, while they were ever ready to bow to this deep and mysterious exhibition of the Divine character, yet were full of distress and activity, or joy and praise, according as their Master's work was retarded or advanced.

IV. *Are we laying ourselves out for our work ?* There is sometimess a heartlessness about us, most paralyzing to the activity of faith, quenching to the faint spark of Ministerial zeal, and Christian love. Mr. Scott warns us against it, as ' very dishonourable to the mercy and grace of the Gospel, and to his name, who commands his servants to *rejoice in hope.*'* Weariness of our work, when it seems at a low ebb of prosperity, is indeed much to be deprecated. Like the disciples, " at our Lord's command," we must continue to " let down the net," even though " we have toiled all night, and caught nothing."† But is it even too long a time to wait? It is under circumstances of discouragement that the blessedness of the work is most sensibly realized. It is then that experience teaches us, that its supports do not spring from sensible excitements, but must be wholly drawn from faith, and from the constraining love of an unseen Saviour. Our failure, therefore, as has been well observed—should ' not be a cause for relaxation in diligence, or for despondency in spirit, or for remission in prayer. Let it rather be an argument for renewed energy, for greater zeal and earnestness.'‡ Like the ancient servants of God—enflamed

* Scott's Life, p. 344. † Luke v. 5.

‡ Bishop of Winchester's Ministerial Character of Christ, p. 94. ' To relinquish or intermit parochial labour, because it is not attended with success, would be terribly inexcusable. Labour on ; commit the matter to God ; wait patiently ; get a feeling of the bowels of Christ ; and die, praying, Lord, pity the people.'—Adam's Private Thoughts.

by circumstances of discouragement,* let us be found in weeping tenderness of intercession before our God.† But let us remember that inactive prayer without exertion will subject us to his reproof—"Wherefore criest thou unto me? Get thee up, wherefore liest thou upon thy face."‡

The axiom—'Duties are ours—events are God's,' is precisely that mixture of Arminianism and Calvinism that constitutes the true Ministerial habit. It is, however, a maxim for rest in unvarying effort—not in slumbering supineness. Philip Henry assures us—'The more we do, the more we may do in the service of God.'§ And therefore let us satisfy ourselves—are we using all the means in our power, and with all the earnestness in our power—like men, filled with what Lord Shaftesbury was pleased to call—'the heroic passion of saving souls?' Is nothing done defectively, or in a wrong spirit? Can we think of nothing more that might be done? Does "the trumpet give" either "an uncertain, or a feeble sound?"‖ What weekly provision is there for our flock—for those of them especially, who feel the intervals between the Sabbaths to

* Exod. xxxii. 19. Acts xiv. 14. xxii. 16.

† Lam. i. 4. Joel ii. 17. ‡ Exod. xiv. 15. Josh. vii. 10.

§ Life, p. 53. The account given of Rutherford's personal diligence may serve to illustrate this. 'He was accustomed to rise every morning at three o'clock. The early parts of the day he spent in prayer, meditation and study; and the remainder of it was devoted to his more public duties; to the visitation of the sick, the afflicted, and the dying, and to the examination and encouragement in godliness of the different families of his congregation.' Murray's Life, ut supra, p. 43. Let it not be supposed that this sketch is quoted as a pattern for what in most instances would be a speedy suicide. But may not the authentic record of so exciting an example be importantly serviceable in stimulating us to resist the encroachments of self-indulgence, and to raise the standard of Ministerial self-denial in the daily discharge of our work.

‖ 1 Cor. xiv. 8.

be long? What is there, that shows our readiness to be "out of season," as well as "in season, to watch in all things, to do the work of an Evangelist, to make full proof of our Ministry?" Do our people mark, in our going in and out before them, a *daily* renewal of our Ordination vow, without reservation for our own ease and interest? Do we count the day lost, when something has not been either written, or said, or done, in our Master's service? There is indeed such a thing as going through the outward routine of the Christian Ministry with respectability. But how different is this from the self-denying self-devotedness to this great work—spiritualizing even our most cursory and much more our stated employments—constantly devising some plan for the benefit of our flock, and making it our great aim to elevate their expectations to a higher standard of obligation and of privilege. It is the holy, humble, and laborious Ministry, concentrating doctrine, spirit, example, intensity of interest, and entire endeavour, that is prospered of God for his own Divine purposes.* Mr. Scott justly observes—that 'Satan prevails as much by persuading Ministers to sit still, or merely to go on in the beaten round, without attempting any thing more, as in any other way.'† For

* Scarcely one word in our translation of Col. i. 29. (marking the frame of the Apostle's spirit in his work) seems to answer the emphasis of the original—κοπιῶ—αγωνιζομενος—κατα την ενεργειαν αυτου—ενεργουμενην εν εμοι—εν δυναμει—I labour even to weariness. I strive as in a conflict. I struggle according to the inward operation of Christ working effectually in me with great and exceeding power. It seems, as Dr. Hammond remarks, as if 'all the agonistical phrases in use among the ancient Grecians were culled out and scattered among his Epistles; fetched from Olympus to Zion, from Athens to Jerusalem, and all little enough to express the earnestness of the holy violence of his soul in this καλος αγων.' Sermon entitled, The Pastor's Motto.

† Life, p. 213.

indeed, however great may be the qualifications of the present moment, they can never annul the "necessity that is laid upon us," as "scribes instructed unto the kingdom of heaven," to seek to excel in our work, and to acquire greater skill, richer stores and sweeter unction for its all-important engagements. An aged Minister when exhorted to be more sparing of himself, once observed—'When a man has loitered the best part of his day, and the evening draws on, he had need double his strokes.' And surely, all of us, with a livelier impression of the near conclusion of our work, and pondering its importance according to the worth of souls, should be more active in discovering, inventing, and improving from time to time some fresh point of contact with the souls dropping into eternity before our eyes—some new medium of more accurate acquaintance with their individual condition,* some closer intimacy with their false refuges, some nearer access to their affections, some sharper edge for the piercing of their consciences—that ultimately the Saviour might be honoured and reign in them, as his redeemed people. Many schemes may be devised for this purpose, of little outward display, but of powerful influence upon our

* Dr. Doddridge kept a memorandum book in his desk, in which he set down hints, as they occurred to him, of what might be done for the good of the congregation. At the close of every year he took a large and distinct view of its state, wrote some remarks upon it, and laid down rules for his future conduct in his relation to it.'—Orton's Life, ch. v. 'Were the Lord to make me young again,' said the excellent Mr. Brown on his death-bed, I think I should study to devise some other means for the gaining of souls than those which I have used, and to prosecute them with more activity than ever I did.'—Life and Remains, p 287. 'If an angel,' said Dr. Mather, 'were in the flesh, as I am, and in such a post as mine, what methods would he use to glorify God!' One of Plato's qualifications for his disciple—φιλοπονος—(De Repub. Lib. vi.) illustrates the industry, interest, and labour of him who would exhibit his whole heart fixed in the work of God.

public Ministrations. Of what avail is our knowledge (except to increase the awful balance at the day of account) if it be not sanctified to the work of God? As men of God consecrated to his special service, we must always be at work for God, as if our life was one continued moving on in the course of the Ministry, and our sweetest rest was found in his service. As a beloved friend of the Writer's once observed, (exemplifying unconsciously his own character,)—'The true pastor is so devoted to his parish, that his parish is to him in some sense the whole world. He should have no heart as it were for any thing else. His invention, and every faculty of the mind, should always be upon the stretch to discover and execute means for benefiting his parish. Indeed, without this entire devotedness of mind and power to our work, how can we be said to listen to the Divine caution—"Take heed to the Ministry thou hast received of the Lord, that thou fulfil it."*

V. *Does the spirit of love characterize our Ministrations?* Let us inquire *generally, as to our interest in our work.* "Not by constraint," is the spirit of our office; at least with no other constraint but "the love of Christ."† Our duty should be our delight—our work our wages."‡ It may be well to ask—what fellowship have we here with the experience of eminent servants of God?§ It has been truly remarked—that

* Col. iv. 17. † 1 Peter v. 2, with 2 Cor. v. 14.

‡ 'I may conscientiously take the wages for the work, when I have a distinct consciousness that I would do the work without the wages.' Adam's Private Thoughts.

§ 'I esteem the Ministry the most desirable employment in the world, and find that delight in it, and those advantages from it, which I think hardly any other employment on earth could give me.' Dr. Doddridge—'Now after near forty years' preaching of Christ, I think I would rather beg my bread all the labouring days

'justice can never be done to any profession, which is pursued with aversion or indifference. *Without loving his profession no one can become an able and faithful Minister of the Gospel of Christ.* But to such, the love which David had for the priesthood, for its occupations and duties, will become the living principle of conduct. A faithful Minister will love his profession for the sake of Him who founded it—for the sake of the church and brethren, for whom Christ died—and for the invaluable advantages which it possesses towards the acquisition of happiness here and hereafter.'* 'A Minister,' observes a serious writer, 'who dislikes the business of his calling—who has not *even an ardent love for it*, must lead a very unpleasant life. He saunters away life in listleness—he turns to his own proper functions with reluctance—he toils through them with distaste—he performs them ill, and is dissatisfied with himself, and, from this dissatisfaction, again performs them worse, and is more uneasy in his own feelings and reflections.'† It is not necessary that he should be distinguished by talent, or ecclesiastical dignity or

of the week, for an opportunity of publishing the gospel on the Sabbath, than without such a privilege to enjoy the richest possessions on earth.' Brown—'Were God to present me,' said this excellent man on his death-bed, 'with the dukedom of Argyll, on the one hand, and the being a Minister of the gospel, with the stipend which I have had, on the other, so *pleasant hath the ministry been to me, notwithstanding all my weakness and fears of little success*, that I would instantly prefer the last.' 'I do not wish for any heaven upon earth, besides that of preaching the precious gospel of Jesus Christ to immortal souls.'—Henry Martyn. 'A faithful Minister ought to be the happiest and most cheerful of human beings.'—Bishop Jebb.

* Bishop Burgess's Primary Charge to the Diocese of St. David's, pp. 23—25.

† Gerrard's Pastoral Care, p. 93. See some excellent remarks in Burnet's Pastoral Care, chap. vii.

preferment; but that he should labour in his work from sincere love, is of the first moment.*

Let this inquiry also be more specific, with *regard to our love to our people.* The connexion between the Minister and his people is too little considered and felt—at least to the full extent of its interest and responsibility. A general concern on his side, and a respectful regard on theirs, conveys a very inadequate expression of the sacredness and affectionate character of this cementing bond.† But it is not easy to conceive of a Minister's usefulness—at least of his extensive usefulness—without a cordial love to his people. Let him have them on his heart, like the High-Priest on his breast-plate.‡ Let him live with them as a father with his children. '*Bishops*,' as Jerome reminded his friend, '*are not Lords but Fathers.*'§ The Pastoral work without the habitual influence of this principle, is indeed a most severe task; and the return of affectionate respect and assiduity, on the part of our people, will be conceived to be the relics of Popish veneration, or the effect of interested motives or enthusiastic feelings.

* See Witsius 'De Vero Theologo.'

† Bowles gives some judicious rules for the forming of this interesting bond. 1. Kindness of speech and manners, Eccls. x. 12. 2. Sympathy with the trials and perplexities of our people. 2 Cor. xi. 29. 3. Readiness to communicate to their necessities. Acts x. 38. 4. Condescension to their infirmities. 1 Cor. ix. 19—22. x. 33. 5. Social habits of intercourse, *with a strict regard to the main designs of our office.* Luke v. 30. xv. 2, 3. 6. Watching against incidental occasions of irritation. Further—to maintain this Pastoral union, he recommends—1. To avoid, as much as possible, worldly connexion of business with our people, as a fruitful source of contention. Jer. xv. 10. 2. In the necessary intercourse of this world with them, to have a careful guard over our own spirit. 3. To bury all remembrance of the ill-natured speeches or injuries to which we may be exposed—in giving an ear or thought to which, we may embroil ourselves in endless and most hurtful disputes. Lib. i. c. 22.

‡ Exod. xxviii. 29. § Jer. ad Nepot.

But, in truth, none but those who "watch for souls, as they that must give account," can know the painful anxiety of the Christian Minister, "until Christ be formed in his people, the hope of glory;" or understand his intense interest in superintending the various stages of their growth unto the perfect man."* They cannot be safely left to grow up without food and instruction, on the strength of some supposed innate principle

* The following interesting and accurate sketch will touch many a chord of Ministerial sympathy and excitement—'How beautiful and holy in all its perfection of obligation is the spiritual connexion which subsists between a faithful Minister of Christ and the flock, which he is appointed to feed with the pure word of God! How many are the methods by which that bond of affection may be more closely drawn! How various are the ways in which a faithful and vigilant Pastor may apply himself to the consciences of men, and promote their spiritual welfare, administering instruction, reproof, consolation; "becoming all things to all men, that he might by all means save some;" always on the watch for opportunities of seasonable interspersing the great truths and warnings of the gospel; anxiously alive to the symptoms of religious improvement in his flock, and looking at that as his strong encouragement and rich reward! Many an anxious care does he experience for the welfare of those who are endeared to him by the sacred sympathy of spiritual affinity; many a sorrow for failures, in which the world thinks he has no interest; many a joy also for blessings which he alone perceives descending upon the heads of those whom he loves in the Lord. And such a shepherd is not without a recompense, even in this world; "the sheep follow him, for they know his voice." Such, my brethren, were the apostles; such were the first pastors and teachers of the church of Christ; such have been many holy fathers of that church, who imbibed the true spirit of that gospel, which it is intended to uphold and propogate; and in proportion as all its Ministers, by the aid of that Spirit, who is promised to them as an abiding and sanctifying Spirit, can assimilate themselves to that perfect model of self-devotedness and disinterestedness; of ardent zeal for the salvation of mankind, and of singleness of intention, as preachers of the gospel only; in that proportion will they be "burning and shining lights" to illuminate and purify the world; and in that proportion will the kingdom of Christ on earth be set forward, and his great designs of mercy carried on towards their accomplishment.' Bishop Blomfield's Lectures on the Acts, pp. 114—116.

of life. Nor do they ever arrive at that state, which does not require all our watchfulness and care for their preservation. They need exhortation, not only in a careless and backsliding state, but as was before observed,* as the appointed means of maintaining Christian steadfastness, and of "going on unto perfection." Nor is there any feeling of an anxious parent that does not in its measure form a part of the experience of the Christian Minister.† Even needful reproof will be conveyed in parental language;‡ and the general spirit of the Pastoral duty, when moulded upon the principles of the Gospel, will differ as widely from mere official advice or remonstrance, as the tender counsel of an affectionate father from the accurate tuition of a well-principled instructor.§ If indeed, on looking round upon our flock, we can see no one, who, in the language of the Apostle, "owes to us his soul,"‖ we can have no conception of the endearing bond of attachment, that unites a faithful shepherd to his deeply indebted flock. But to prove the existence of such a bond would be a most superfluous task. Every parochial visit reminds the affectionate Minister of its happy influence, binding him a willing servant to his Divine Master, and to the church for which he died.¶

* Part. V. ch. ii. sect. viii.

† Ambrose could say to his people—'Non minus vos diligo, quos genui ex Evangelio, quam si suscepissem conjugio.' De Offic Lib. i. c. 5.

‡ See 1 Cor. iv. 14. § Ibid. 15, 16. ‖ Philemon 19.

¶ Rutherford's Pastoral Life furnishes a beautiful illustration of this subject. He could assure his flock, that they were the objects of his 'tears, cares, fears, and daily prayers—that he laboured among them early and late'—and (to use his strong language) 'my witness is above, that your heaven would be two heavens to me, and the salvation of you all as two salvations to me.' Letters, part i, sect. 6. They, in their turn, in petitioning against

Now let us apply the Apostle's description of his own Ministerial feelings to our experience. His Epistles to the Philippians and Thessalonians present a most exciting picture of Ministerial endearment, in his thankfulness for his people, his prayers for them, and delight in them. Mark his continual "longings to see" his different flocks, for their mutual enlargement and comfort. "Taken from them," sometimes "in presence," never "in heart," his return to them is the subject of his constant prayers, in which he intreats them to unite with him.* Nor could he meanwhile be satisfied without hearing of their state and progress, and even sending messengers for that purpose, as if good tidings of them were the life of his own life, and an excitement to his continual thankfulness.† He cannot forbear telling them, while his "mouth was opened," how "enlarged his heart" was towards them—that he was looking with a father's expectations to be "somewhat filled with their company"—and as if a father's tenderness was inadequate to convey the overflow of his heart) that he was ready to "cherish them, as a nursing-mother her children;" being "affectionately desirous to impart even his own soul to them."‡ His spiritual "conflicts" on their account; his habit of carrying them always "in his heart, to live and die with them;" nay, even in his readiness to be detained from the immediate presence of his Redeemer for their sakes, and the joy with which he anticipated the offering of his life "upon

his removal from them, declared, that 'it hath pleased God so to evidence his calling here, by His blessing on his labours amongst us, the consequence whereof we find *to be a mutual union of our hearts betwixt him and us.*'—Murray's Life, ut supra, Appendix, F.

* Rom. i. 9—12. xv. 30—32. 1 Thess. ii. 17.

† Phil. ii. 19. 1 Thess. iii. 1—11.

‡ 2 Cor. vi. 11. Rom. xv. 24. 1 Thess. ii. 7, 8.

the sacrifice and service of their faith,"* are far beyond our standard of Ministerial sympathy. He was ever willing to wave the right of command for the language of intreaty—for the more effectual attainment of his object.† His disinterested love loses sight of all personal injury, and forgets all occasions of resentment in his grand object of the restoration of his people to the simplicity of the Gospel.‡ Nay, he is willing to lose their affections for himself, if he could but win them to Christ; overcoming ungrateful returns with the continued overflowing of affection; "seeking not theirs, but them; very gladly spending and being spent for them, though the more abundantly he loved them, the less he was loved."§ Glad was he even of his own weakness, if only they were strong, having his mind absorbed with one great desire—"their perfection."‖ The Writer knows not when he has felt more sensibly his almost infinite distance from the scriptural standard of obligation, than while sketching out this rough outline of what a Minister ought to be, and what he might be. This is the true spirit of the Ministry, embodied, personified, and moulded to real life and experience. For be it remembered, that this care, solicitude, and tenderness, expressed in prayers, tears, continual sacrifices of personal ease and indulgence, and frequent

* Col. ii. 1, 2. 2 Cor. vii. 3. Phil. i. 21—24. ii. 17.

† Philemon 8, 9. ‡ Gal. iv. 11—15.

§ 2 Cor. xii. 12—14. 'This motto of an Apostle ("I seek not yours, but you") is transmitted to us with his Apostleship, to be transcribed, not into our rings and seals of orders, but into our hearts; there, if you please, to be engraven with a diamond, set as the stones in our ephod, the jewels in our breast-plate, gloriously legible to all that behold us.'—Hammond's Pastor's Motto, ut supra.

‖ 2 Cor. xiii. 9.

exposure to imminent peril,* were not the effect of direct miracle or inspiration, but the effusions of a heart lamenting over the miserable condition of perishing sinners; feeling deep parental anxiety for his own children in the faith; glowing with the love of Christ, and filled with his Spirit. Nor can it be supposed for a moment that these are graces and duties peculiar either to the Apostle or to the Apostolic age; they are rather the exhibition of the standard, which all, who have pledged themselves to the sacred Ministry, would do well habitually to contemplate; and the practical influence of which upon their own Ministrations will be productive of eminent success. 'He who has not this solicitous care and Apostolic tenderness, knows not what it is to be a father and a Pastor.' But 'happy is that Pastor, to whom his life, his labours, his zeal, and the testimony of his conscience, give the just confidence to say, that he loves the flock of Christ, and that he loves it only for and in Christ, only by his charity, and in his spirit.'† That he should have a shepherd's eye and a shepherd's heart, is equally important for his acceptance with the flock, and with the chief Shepherd. The former will often bear and hear the most repulsive truths in such a spirit;‡ and if the Pastor is not in every one's mouth, he is at least in the hearts of the people of his charge. The latter expects

* 2 Cor. vi. 4, 5. xi. 23—27.

† Quesnel on Phil. ii. 19. 1 Cor. xvi. 24.

‡ Dilige, et dic quicquid voles. August. in Gal. vi. 1. As an illustrative instance of this—a Minister of a remarkable spirit of love, sharply rebuked in the presence of a clerical friend, a parishioner for gross misconduct. The severity of the reproof astonished his friend, who could not help declaring, that in his own case, with one of his people, he should have expected an irreconcileable breach. The answer was the result of Christian wisdom and experience—'O my friend, when there is love in the heart, you may say any thing.'

to see in him the image of his own Divine tenderness and love—"feeding his flock like a shepherd, gathering the lambs in his arms, and carrying them in his bosom, and gently leading those that are with young."*

But if this love to our people is the spring of success, it is equally certain that the principle of this love to souls is love to him that purchased them. Hence flows all our pains, patience, and care; from the delight of "spending and being spent" in the service of one we supremely love. There are many tracts of life before us of far greater temporal indulgence. But the recollection of an infinite debt of love enlivens the endurance of the Ministerial cross with the readiness of love—'Love,' then, 'is the great endowment of a shepherd of Christ's flock. He says not to Peter—'Art thou wise, or learned, or eloquent,' but "lovest thou me." "Then feed my sheep."'† And surely the under-shepherds cannot forget the attractive and commanding influence of that thrice repeated request,‡ enforced as it is by the power of his example, and by the constraining obligations of his love. Our whole charge must then be "dearly beloved and longed for." Many of them doubtless will be our "joy and crown," and the prospect of meeting them as such, "in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ, at his coming," is an auxiliary joy belonging to our anticipation of that glorious consummation.§

VI. *Do we pray for our flock?* Thus Moses, Aaron,

* Isaiah xl. 11.

† Leighton on 1 Peter v. 2. 'Christ might have said to Peter—If you love me, fast, lie on the naked ground, be in watchings, defend the oppressed, be the father of the orphan, and the husband of the widow. But, passing by all these—what does he say—Feed my sheep.' Chrys. De Sacerd. Lib. ii.

‡ John xxi. 15—17. § Phil. iv. 1. 1 Thess. ii. 19, 20.

and Samuel,* stood in the gap. Such was the power of Jeremiah's intercession, as to restrain the execution of the Divine purposes.† This was a chief mode with the Apostle of expressing his "longing after" his people, "in the bowels of Jesus Christ." He seems as if he never bowed his knee before his God without expressing his interest on their behalf.‡ Could such a spirit of intercession fail of "having power with God, and prevailing?" Without this prevalency with God we can never hope to prevail with men. 'The Minister of the Gospel should indeed be as the angels of God, going betwixt him and his people, not only bringing down useful instructions from God to them, but putting up earnest supplications to God for them. And without this, there can be little answer or success in the other; little springing up of this seed, though Ministers sow it plentifully in preaching, unless they secretly water it with their prayers and tears."§

Our *constant need of this duty* is most palpable. Why is it that we so seldom mark any signal displays of Divine power—any extended awakening of souls—but because we have so little of that large spirit of intercession, which is at once the preparative and forerunner of extended success? Why is it that our words often seem to die in our mouths, or drop and die between us and our people—that we seldom speak as if we hoped to prevail—that we are ready to despond under pro-

* Exod. xxxii. 11, 31. Numb. xvi. 46—48. 1 Sam. xii.
† See Jer. vii. 16. ‡ See Eph. i. 16. Phil. i. 4. 2 Tim. i. 3.
§ Leighton on 1 Peter v. 10. Such prayers as Eph. i. 17—19. iii. 14—19. Phil. i. 9—11. Col. i. 9—12, &c. are well deserving of study as models for enlarged and profitable Ministerial intercession. It was well observed by an old divine, that 'the Minister, who is more before his people *in public*, than he is before God for them *in private*, has little reason to expect a blessing on his labours.'

tracted unfruitfulness—but because our secret exercises on behalf of our people are so cold and infrequent. Do we not complain of a spirit of formality with our people? Time was when we worked together upon new ground, when sin crouched under us, when our machine from the impulse of excitement seemed to move of itself. Perhaps now the attendance on our lectures has fallen short—Our churches are not crowded as at the first. Indifference has crept in. Even Christians have waxed cold. But has not the mainspring of the machine been slackened? Has not pleading intercession been neglected? Whatever variation of system may be attempted, (and some occasionsl variations will be necessary,) nothing will permanently maintain the real interest among us, where the excitement of novelty has subsided, but increased energy and faith in Ministerial prayer.*

Our *sense of the importance* of this duty is intimately connected with a due impression of Ministerial responsibility.† It is the only means by which our Ministrations can bring a blessing to our people, or by which we can maintain that affectionate self-denying devotion to their service, which is one of the mainsprings of our work. Thus also by increasing supplication for them, we learn how to preach to them, we are supported under discouragement on their

* Dr. Doddridge felt this so strongly, that it was his custom to set apart days of public prayer, when the work of religion seemed to be at a stand in his congregation.—Orton's Life, ch. v.

† Fleming mentions the earnestness of Mr. John Welch—often in the coldest winter nights rising for prayer, found weeping on the ground, and wrestling with the Lord on account of his people, and saying to his wife, when she pressed him for an explanation of his distress—'*I have the souls of* 3000 *to answer for, while I know not how it is with many of them.*'—Fulfilment of Scripture, p. 188.

account, and the spark or flame of love is kept alive in the endurance of successive provocations and disappointments.* Individual cases, whether of temptations, perplexity, or obstinacy, should be carried with special earnestness and particularity, "to the throne of grace." 'Without the ability to spread the cases of the people before God on all occasions,'—Cotton Mather tells his pastor and student—'I should not judge you qualified for an ordination to the pastoral cure of a flock among the churches of God, but worthy to have an ΑΝΑΞΙΟΣ cried out upon you.'† *The encouragement to this duty* is full and explicit. It was when Daniel was presenting *supplication for his people*, as well as for himself—"*whiles he was speaking in prayer*"—at the beginning of his supplication, "the commandment came forth."‡ And if the language of prayer with us was substituted for such a complaint as this—"There is none that calleth upon thy name—that stirreth up himself to take hold of thee; for thou hast hid thy face from us,"—it could not be, that he should "*long* be angry against the prayer of his people."§ "Oh! that thou wouldest rend the heaven, that thou wouldest come down, that the mountains might flow down at thy presence.—O Lord, revive thy work."‖ Surely in the exercise of penitent returning to him, and faithful waiting upon him, "after two

* See the exquisite portrait of Ouranius in Law's Serious Call, ch. xxi.

† Student and Pastor, p. 202. His own ability in prayer was most remarkable. On his days of special intercession, he is stated to have individualized with more or less minuteness the case of each member of his church—amounting to upwards of four hundred persons. See his Life.

‡ Dan. ix. 16—20. § Isa. lxiv. 7. with Psalm lxxx. 4.

‖ Isa. lxiv. 1. Hab. iii. 2.

days he will revive us; on the third day he will raise us up, and we shall live in his sight."

But *constancy* in this *work* is indispensable to the full receipt of its blessings. If in the midst of our discouragements we can appeal to our flock—"God forbid that I should sin against the Lord in ceasing to pray for you"*—if our return from the house (concluding the service of the temple with "lifting up holy hands" to bless our people) is—not the interruption of the course of our work—but a transition only to another part of it—if the seed just sown is secretly followed and watered with prayer—still is this with us as with the Apostle—an unceasing employment—"giving account with joy," or with grief," as we have "watched for the souls"† of our flock, and marked the progress or decline of the work of God among them. *The subjects of our intercession* should have respect to the success of the work of God, in its awakening, enlightening, strengthening, and consoling influences—to his presence in our congregation (upon which, and not upon the ability and fervour of our Ministrations, the efficacy of our Preaching supremely depends); to the supply of unction, life, and comfort proportioned to the weaknesses, and wants, and circumstances of temptation of each of our people: and finally to the general effusion of his Holy Spirit upon the Church, to advance and consummate the glory of the latter days; to "establish the mountain of the Lord's house in the tops of the mountains;" that "all

* 1 Sam. x. ii. 23.

† Comp. 1 Thess. iii. 9, 10. Rom. xi. 2. 3. with Heb. xiii. 17,—where the Apostle is primarily referring, not to the solemnity of the final account, but to a continual rendering of account to God in such a manner as is here intimated. See Owen, Doddridge, and Scott in loco.

flesh may see the salvation of God," and the voice of Zion may be heard, "lifted up with strength, saying unto the cities of Judah, Behold your God."* This spirit of Ministerial prayer is as necessary to form the character of a Pastor, as the spirit of personal prayer to form that of a Christian. Nor can there be hope of acceptance for Ministerial diligence in every department of our momentous labour, unless it be constantly cherished.† Let us therefore exhibit our character, as "watchmen set upon the walls,—who shall never hold their peace day nor night;" and let us not doubt but he will, before long, return with an abundant increase of light, and power and love, "until he establish and make Jerusalem a praise in the earth."‡ The blessed influence of this spirit of intercession upon the public Ministration would be manifest to all men. Ministers who habitually pray for their people, will not fail to find their people praying with them and for them, so that "for the gift bestowed upon them by the means of many persons, thanks will be given by many on their behalf."§

Let us, then, adopt as our own, the words of that most eminent servant of God, Moses, when praying for the display of the Divine power and glory to his people Israel;—"Make us glad according to the days wherein thou hast afflicted us, and the years wherein we have seen evil. Let thy work appear unto thy

* Isaiah ii. 2. xl. 5. 9.

† 'That Ministration of the word, which is not accompanied with continual prayer for its success, is not like to have any great blessing go along with it. For a Minister to preach the word without constant prayer for its success, is a likely means to cherish and strengthen secret atheism in his own heart, and very unlikely to work holiness in the lives of others.' Owen on Apostacy, p. 441. one of his most searching and important treatises.

‡ Isaiah lxii. 6. 7. § 2 Cor. i. 11.

servants, and thy glory unto their children. Let the beauty of the Lord our God be upon us; and establish thou the work of our hands upon us; yea, the work of our hands establish thou it."*

* Psalm xc. 15—17.

THE END.

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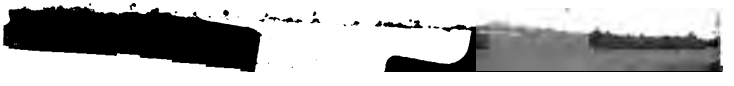

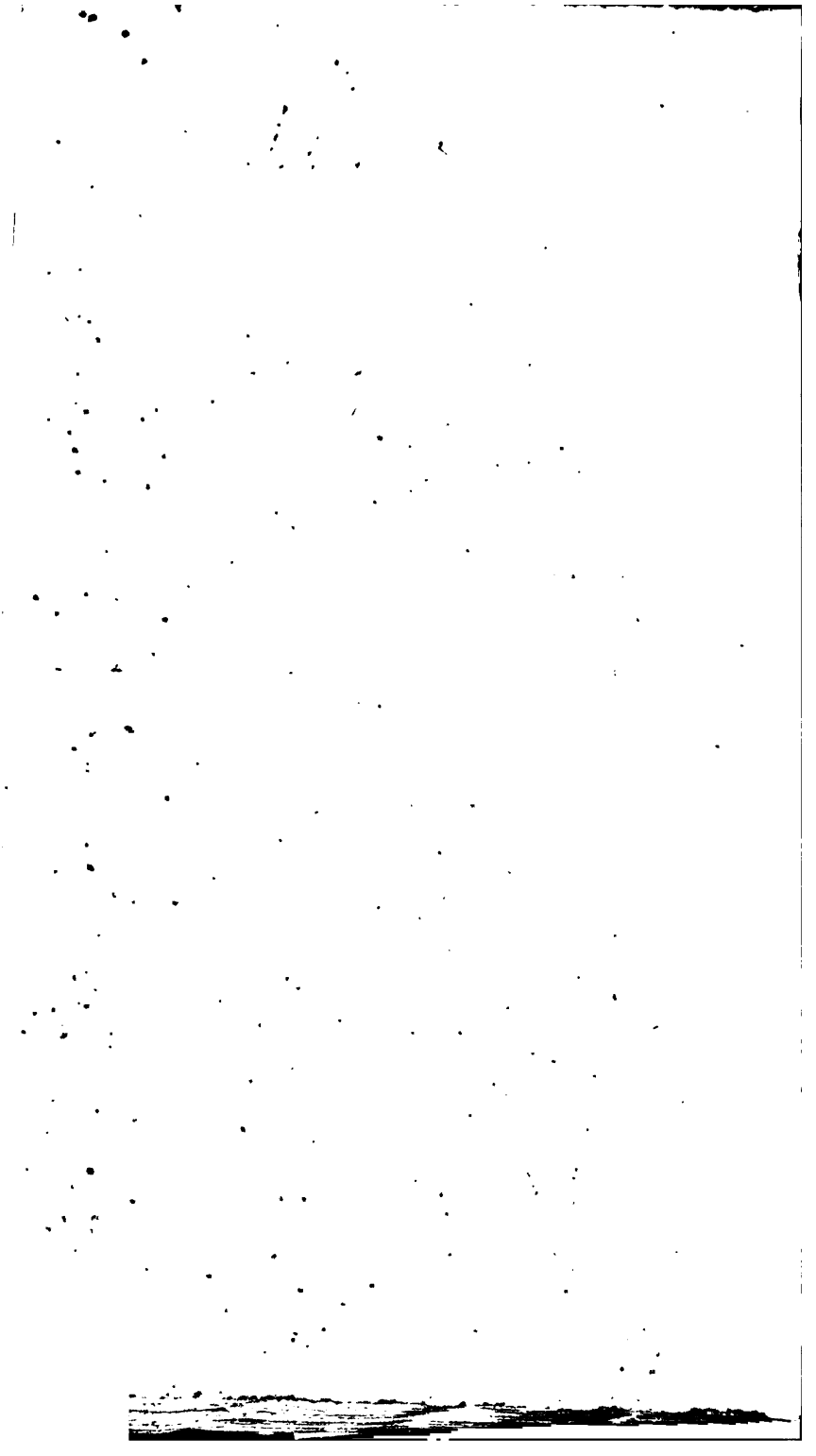

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